

spare Rib

A Women's Liberation Magazine
October 1977 Issue 63
35 pence

P. 523/344



Deciding to have a baby

"Release the prisoners" – Chilean patchwork pictures
Are you a working class woman? (see page 14)

Women's liberation too sexist for Students Union

Canada - domestic workers organise... USA - battered women and
the police... Accusing a doctor of sexual assault

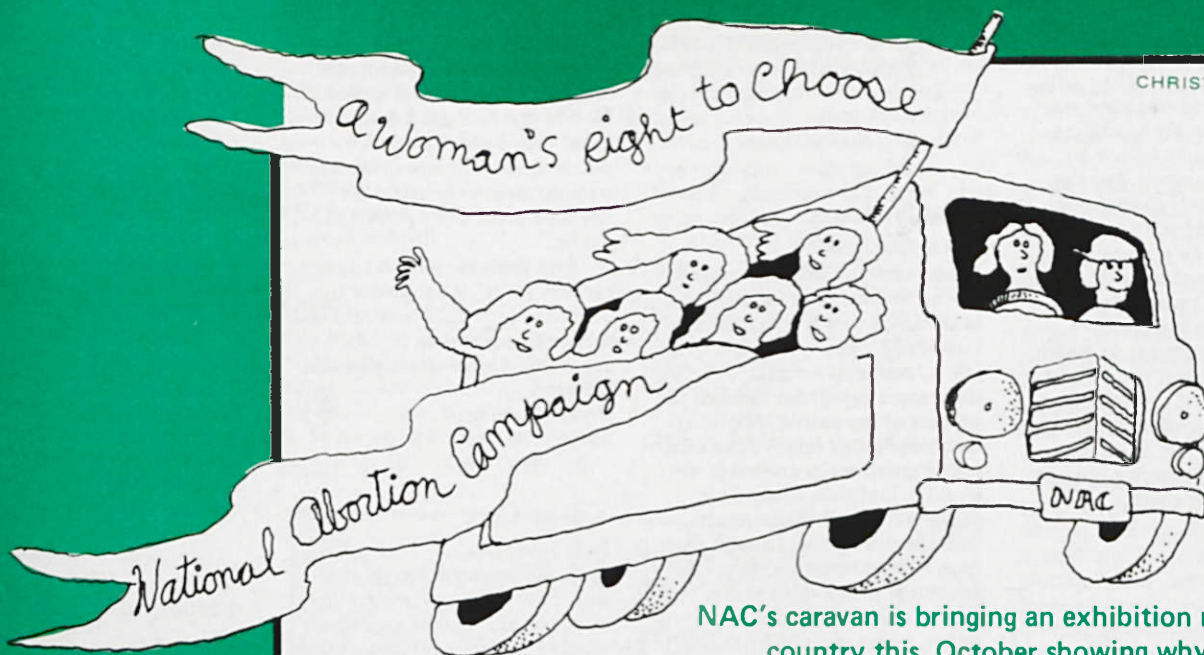
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NAC's caravan is bringing an exhibition round the country this October showing why abortion must be a woman's right to choose.

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Illustration by Christine Roche

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Not Trying to be Men

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I'm a feminist and also a lesbian. A lot of letters in *SR* annoy me but being a feminist I don't let them get me too much. But I'm furious about Paula Castleton's letter (*SR* 62). What's a "target audience"? *SR* is a magazine for heterosexuals, homosexuals, bisexuals, be they male or female, as long as they're interested in the feminist movement. And who said anything about "masculinising women"? You can't surmise that all lesbians are butch and masculine; lesbians aren't trying to be men. How can she call herself a feminist and cancel *SR* for that?
Sheena Rae
London SE9

Unladylike

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I was utterly stupefied at the banishment of *Spare Rib* from Ireland. Having lived here for two years I am appalled at the second class rating of women in this country.

Since my family and I moved here, I have not met one Irish person of around my age (14) that has even heard of the expression 'Ms'. When I wrote it on my exam paper, my English teacher (a feminist herself) said that I was the only "woman libber" that she had ever taught.

At school, Wesley College, the boys and girls do P.E. separately. The boys do rugby, swimming and cricket, we do hockey, swimming and rounders. During break once, some girls started to play soccer with the boys, but they were stopped "because it was unladylike and was giving the school a bad name". A group of senior girls tried to start a girls' soccer team, but were turned down. The school council said there was not enough support, but all the girls I know thought it was a fab idea.

In first form, all the boys have to do Mechanical Drawing, while the girls have to do Home Economics. Last year (second form) there was only two other girls in the Mechanical Drawing class (out of approx. 50 boys). And I thought our school was co-ed! The female teachers and pupils have to wear skirts all year round, even in the snow.

Some time ago, all the boys had to miss class to move some chairs in the Assembly Hall (this sort of thing happens all the time). Also we haven't had any sex education yet and we missed out the part in our science books about human reproduction.

But the main reason for my writing is to ask you a big favour: I am intending to start a feminist group at school, among my friends, but I don't know where to get any info on abortion, contraception, rape, the political and legal status of women, feminist groups, etc., in Ireland. I have some old *Spare Ribs* and my mother has the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* which will be very helpful to my project but I would be grateful if you could

send me any leaflets, posters, etc., on the above subjects.

Love
Samantha Rennie
Sandycove, Co Dublin

Bloody Angry

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
It has taken my daughter and I several months to get settled here in the UK, and a few months ago I decided I must "pull finger" and join a local feminist group, one of the reasons being that I missed the support of my sisters. Well, after numerous calls I finally found that such a group really existed in my area. Oh joy! then I found the group was closed! Same results with the next group. In both there were 8 to 10 members. I am now in contact with a third group, but cannot attend a meeting until, I gather, I am approved by the existing members! I'm shattered, and bloody angry. I'm going to use the unforgivable phrase, but "this wouldn't happen at home!" Were you to arrive at my home city in New Zealand and contacted us, you would be welcomed, listened to, invited to return to the next meeting and as sure as I'm writing this, would have made one or two friends before the evening was over. Surely a closed group is defeating our aims? What happens if one needs help desperately? Yours in sisterhood
Lorraine Chave
London N3

allowed to behave in a way that, however innocent on their part, could attract a man's attention. Parents can do a good deal to safeguard their little daughters by watching these points and gently training them to behave with feminine grace and decorum in public."

Even five-year-olds, it appears, can 'ask for it'. What justice for women in rape cases indeed if it is believed 'provocative female behaviour' begins so early in life! In sisterhood
Joyce Woolridge
Stretford, Lancs

Kill or Cure

Dear *Spare Rib*,
We fully support the actions of women to bring rape to public attention, but are worried about some of the current feminist thinking on sentencing. Of course revenge is bound to be uppermost in the mind of a victim of rape (as we both know from experience) but should we allow ourselves to support a repressive and unconstructive prison system?

Susan Brownmiller in her book *Against Our Will* says "I... view a prison sentence as a just and lawful societal solution to... criminal activity... as civilised retribution and as a deterrent against the commission of future crimes. Whether or not a term in jail is truly 'rehabilitative' matters less... than whether or not a guilty

the reasons why they became rapists. Two of them who were about to be paroled had arranged lecture tours to other prisons to set up more study groups. This is certainly more constructive than to incarcerate without any attempt to make rapists examine their attitude towards women. However, in this country, educational programmes of this kind are not encouraged.

Obviously the immediate objective is to make sure that rapists do not get away with it, but feminists should look further than simple punishment as a solution.
Marie-Dominique Downs
Sarah Greaves
London W10

Perpetuating a Split

Dear sisters,
I was sorry to see my report of the Trafalgar Square rape rally (*SR* 62) come over through your presentation as an attack on Women Against Rape, because I basically agree with them that rape is a function of our economic powerlessness. This doesn't mean the only way to fight rapists is to ask for money! I did have criticisms of WAR; but I also felt really pissed off that the rest of us feminists still find it so hard to take any coherent public action.

It's good that *SR*'s becoming less timid about reporting disputes in the movement — but a pity to leave out half the argument and perpetuate a split which stops us all from growing.
Love from
Amanda Sebestyen
London E2

Misleading?

To *Spare Rib*,
As one of the women pictured in the left hand photo on page 27, *SR* 62, I would like to point out that I would have appreciated being asked if I wanted to appear in your magazine, especially as the photograph is very misleading and the comments imply that we are all part of Wages for Housework, Women for Life, or voyeurs!

I was none of these and nor were many of the women pictured with me.

I was there to support the women testifying against rape and in no way do I want to be used by a magazine whose content for the most part I do not agree with.
Jacki Gloux
(no address supplied)

We agree the caption could have been better worded — perhaps "Wages for Housework banner, Women for Life banner and men looking on", which is what we meant. But if a meeting/rally/picket/demonstration is held in a public place, with the national press present, we too feel free to take photos. If someone from *SR* photographs an individual or a private meeting, obviously she asks if that's alright.

The Old



Dear sisters
I don't like the new International Feminist Symbol at all — we're more than just a vagina! The old woman's-symbol-with-fist meant something, graphically — woman-power.
Linda Dove
London

Talking to Strangers

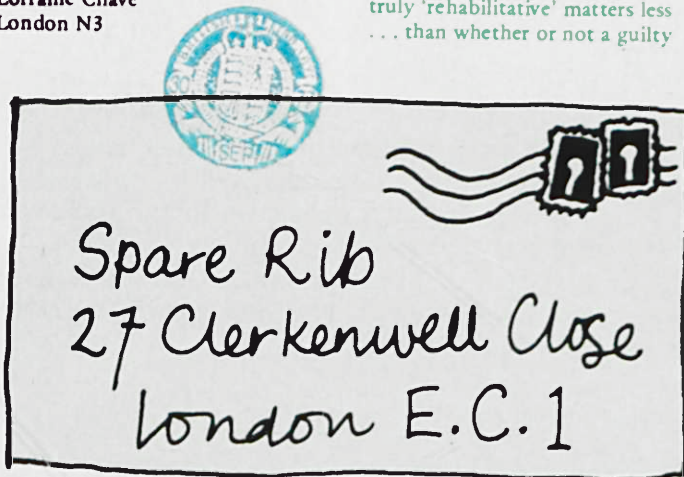
Dear *Spare Rib*,
Woman's Weekly (August 20) included an article titled 'Talking to Strangers' dealing with the problem of safeguarding little girls from would-be child molesters. "(It is often overlooked," said the 'Matron' giving advice, "in these days of freedom and easier social customs... that children may be too provocatively dressed and

offender is given the penalty his crime deserves."

This is a very short-sighted view. The ideas of deterrents and retribution are makeshift solutions in the absence of implementing a radical approach to sentencing.

What happens to the rapist in prison? Most likely he meets other rapists and they mutually reinforce each others' hate for women. Perhaps they exchange courtroom stories and tips on the best lines of defence, so by the time he comes out of prison he may be ready to rape again and with more confidence.

About a year ago there was a programme on television with some film taken inside an American prison where convicted rapists were running study groups on sexism in an apparently successful attempt to understand their conditioning and



So Many Questions . . .

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I have only just found your magazine in my newsagent. I read with great interest your article on Salpingitis (SR 61). I would like to know if you have had any other articles on women's diseases in former issues. I have just had a prolapse repair and been told to have the child I want as soon as possible so that they can do a hysterectomy. I was told brusquely at my bedside by an intimidating doctor and although I have a check-up in six weeks, there are so many questions I would love to have the answer to. If you cannot take up a doctor's time in surgery, how is one going to find the answers? I don't see why women should let men just hack their bodies around and not feel able to have a sit-down talk about it. Talk about why it is best and how at my age, 35, I adjust to the idea of being unfruitful.

If any of your back editions have any of these answers (or future ones) please let me know. I need help and I must find it.
Yours sincerely
Jacqueline Wright
London SW3

See page 17 for a list of back issues on health.

Very Bad Dose

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
Thank you for your article on Salpingitis (SR 61). I am hopefully at the tail end of a very bad dose of it, and that is after a year of pain and anguish and frustration. Nobody seemed very interested in my recovery. I got thrown out of physiotherapy school. And, yes it goes on . . .

But I was glad to see someone got down to investigating the matter. It is an illness that is shamefully discriminated against.
Marianne Dearlove
London NW6

Two Years is a Long Time

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I have been on the Pill for seven years. In the beginning it was to help with my painful periods. I started with Ovulen-50 but it made me depressed. I changed to Minilyn, but my periods started to get painful again. In September '75 I changed to Eugynon.

I became less and less interested in sex, even repulsed by it. I put this down to having started teaching and being very tired. Later I thought it was a natural cyclical disease, but between June last year and May this year, I had intercourse twice. By this time I was beginning to think I needed psychological help. The man I live with was very kind but two years is a long time.

Thinking about things, I put two and two together, and made what I hoped was four and came off the Pill. It worked — two weeks later and I started using my cap regularly and it's lovely.

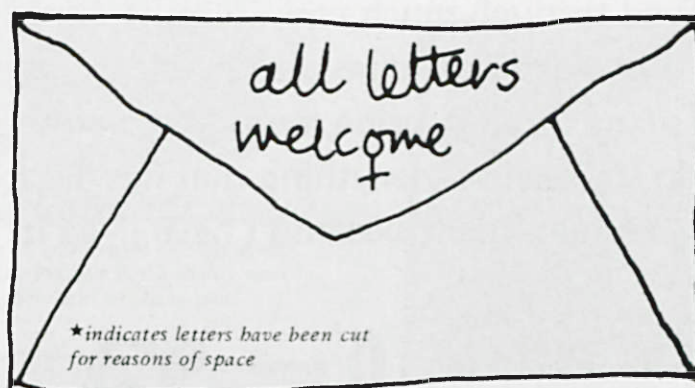
Even now it's hard to accept that those little white pills could have that sort of effect on my head. Don't let the Pill spoil your love life! Yours in sisterhood
Debbie Glass
Sheffield
PS The spermicide I use is made in . . . Maidenhead!

On the Change

*Dear sisters,
One aspect of ourselves in our society which is still shoved under the carpet, apart from widowhood, is the menopause. No two women experience the change in quite the

men and women there is still a great difference. It is only in women that bone brittleness is found through the great loss of calcium during the menopause, and frequently diabetes occurs. But they go on existing, often these days into some lonely old age.

Also there is still this attitude that it is "not quite nice" for a woman over 30 to talk about her sexuality whereas men over 60, bless them, can talk about theirs with impunity.
Yours in sisterhood
Lydia Hodson
Epsom, Surrey



same way. It is not uncommon for the menopause to last for 12 years, say from 38 to 50, or 44 to 56, and during this time the woman may frequently feel unwell and sometimes downright ill. If this is so then how she behaves, how she copes, how her family react, are very important. I remember when my mother was on the change (I was on the brink of adolescence) I could not understand what was taking place and the drastic change in her behaviour. She literally stopped talking, just fell into a state of gloomy silence which was only broken by tears over anything which could be interpreted by her as a personal slight, and occasional spiteful attacks on me. As I grew older I recall a woman telling me, she was herself middle-aged, "There is nothing in this world nastier than middle-aged women." I noticed she avoided female company as much as possible of all ages and made an obvious choice of men's company, not sexually but mentally. As she was a university lecturer, this may have been the fact that she found the male mind to her taste — it was her generation.

But what of ours and those to come? In some countries, Sweden is one, classes are given to women (and their husbands) to prepare themselves for the menopause. It is accepted that men have some form of menopause — priapause is a more correct term. He may have a loss of libido, may regret miserably his lost youth, but if he finds the opportunity of having some pretty younger woman, it does wonders for his libido and his ego, and society applauds him. "Jolly good luck to him. His wife must be off it, not so attractive any more and on her 'what's it'." No such perks for her and little sympathy. Here between

Men the Enemy?

Dear Ms's,
I have just read SR 60 and found it very thought provoking.

As a more intuitive than intellectual feminist I had no idea of the political aspects and look forward to being further enlightened. The only criticism I make is that SR is so exclusively female, any men mentioned are treated as the enemy.

I feel men are in as much or even more need of liberation than women. Surely we should be working towards people's liberation rather than increasing the already huge breach between female and male.

Yours faithfully
Tessa Stuart
Harefield, Middx

Automatically His

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Just another example of the inequality of the tax laws . . .

In preparation for a friendly divorce, we transferred the mortgage from our joint names into my sole name. I subsequently telephoned my tax office to discover why I had not been given the mortgage allowance, only to be told that it was automatically given to my husband, but, yes, I could have it provided he wrote to his tax office and gave his permission!

Jenn Price
Brighton

Wispish

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I am writing to pass on some information about one of your advertisers, Langham Life Assurance (WISP).

After SR 58 came out I wrote off to Langham to find out what was on offer; what's doing the offering appears to be an insurance company that's cashing in on feminist consciousness and career women's earnings as a way of making more profit. To give them credit, they are also providing something that's of use, though rather less than their blurb claims.

The blurb arrived, including a rather twee little booklet, liberally sprinkled with pretty pictures of apples (I) and apple trees in various stages of bloom and maturity. (O, that myth of the apple! Intelligence test: spot the connection between an apple and a life insurance policy.) I wonder if they imagine women won't read a booklet about insurance unless it's full of pretty pictures? Also included was a letter addressed to Mrs Lunn; an interesting assumption, as I had given myself no title when I wrote off. In the back of the booklet was a pre-paid reply card to ask for an agent to call. I didn't send it off. Nevertheless, two weeks later, there was a ring at the doorbell, and there was a man with a black briefcase. The conversation went something like this:

I: Yes?

He: Mrs Lunn, is it?

I: No.

He: Oh, er, Miss Lunn then, I'm from Langham Life Assurance Company. You sent off for the details of WISP. May I come in and do the calculations for you?

I: Not right now. It's not convenient.

He: But I've come all the way from Birmingham.

I: You could have telephoned first.

He: I tried.

I: Right now it's not convenient. Perhaps if you leave me your phone number then I can get in touch with you when I want to. In any case, I object in principle to salesmen turning up on my doorstep when I haven't asked for them. It puts pressure on me to do something I might not want to do.

He: I'm sorry that's how you feel about it.

At that point he left. I don't need to point out to readers of SR the three subtle attempts to hook me into feeling heartless/compliant/discounted (in that order) in the space of a two minute conversation.

So that's an example of what's going on behind the scenes of the WISP ad. Traditionally male chauvinist insurance companies don't change their character overnight; neither do they change their sales techniques. I'm sending a copy of this letter to Langham Life.

They're no worse than any other insurance company I've ever dealt with, and what they have on offer may well be just the right thing for some of us; but sisters, beware their sales technique — it's a long way from being liberated! — but that's what you'd expect in an exploitative capitalist system where an agent has to get his livelihood by earning commission.
Yours in sisterhood
Pam Lunn
Kenilworth, Warks

"We have lived through much and we must explain it . . .

We must find some way to say it.

Often one keeps silent through pride, but I'm going to tell these things;
I'm not ashamed to do so because everything that has happened to me is true.
I can't keep silent because I have lived it."

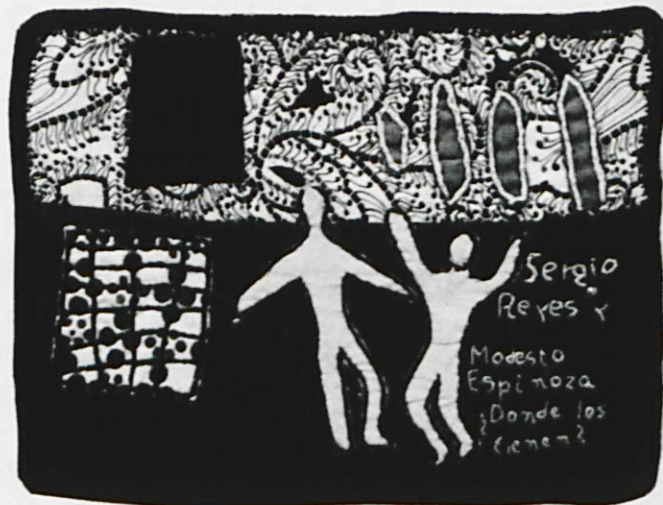
Patchwork Pictures from Chile

by Guy Brett

On June 14 this year, 28 Chileans — 26 women and 2 men — entered the offices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America in the capital city of Santiago. They were relatives of some of the "disappeared" political prisoners in Chile; they declared a hunger strike and they refused to leave until they were told the fate of these 2,000 people arrested by the military junta and then listed merely as "missing".

Because of international scrutiny and domestic resistance, the Chilean junta prefers not to openly arrest people any longer and put them in recognised prisons and camps, but to seize and torture them secretly, without naming them, without charging them. Any attempt by their families to try to trace them is met with harassment, especially by the DINA*, Chile's secret police.

The demonstrators sent an impassioned message to Kurt Waldheim, Secretary General of the United Nations, and he responded by invoking extraterritorial privilege for the mission in Santiago (i.e., that legally it was not part of Chilean territory), so the strikers could not be molested by the Chilean security forces. International response to the occupation was so great that Pinochet (the leader of the junta) was forced to agree, at least ostensibly, with two of the strikers' demands — to look into the



cases of their disappeared relatives, and not to take reprisals for the demonstration.

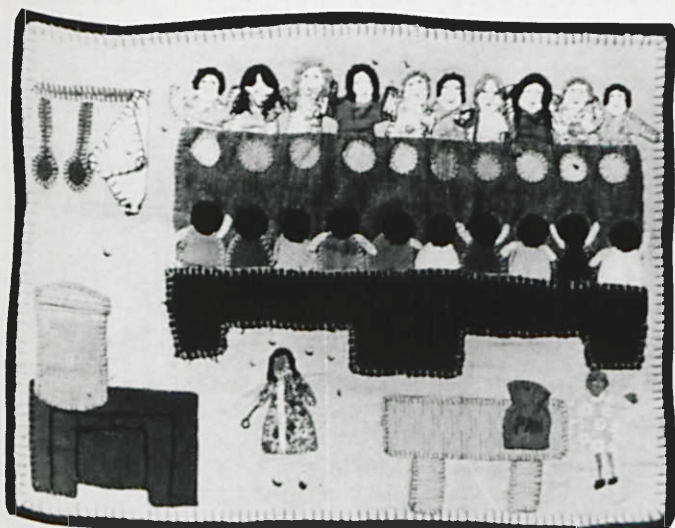
The picture illustrated here — a patchwork sewn of scraps of clothing fabric and wool — was made by the mother of a "disappeared" prisoner. The two people in the picture were arrested together. The four vertical strokes at the top right stand for *Los Cuatro Alamos* (almo = poplar tree), one of the junta's prison camps. The dark square to the left stands for . . . some unknown place, the anguish of knowing nothing. "Sergio Reyes and Modesto Espinosa — where are they?"

Several hundreds of patchwork pictures like this one have been made in Chile in the last two years, despite the atmosphere of terror. It is a popular art of resistance invented by the people themselves because of an overpowering need to express the bitter experiences they are going through and to find a channel of communication to the world outside. Some of the first of these patchworks were made in the prisons, but now they are nearly all made by women (usually the wives or mothers of political prisoners) living in the shanty-towns, the poorest areas, around Santiago. They are not professional artists or artisans, and in general they have worked up and adapted a popular form of embroidery traditionally used to decorate bags and baskets. But

* Since this article went to press, the Chilean junta has announced the dissolution of the DINA and its replacement by an organisation called Central Nacional de Informaciones (National Information Centre). Despite the innocuous name, nothing has changed.



Political prisoners at the bars of the cells like caged animals in the bleak architecture of the prison. Their families in the shanty-towns have to go on with normal life, but the world is split in two.



A *comedor popular* – collective kitchen. In all the shanty-towns of Chile's cities and in many rural areas, the people have faced the problem of starvation by setting up public canteens for undernourished children. Here food is given to about 40,000 children who would otherwise have nothing to eat at all. The food is supplied as far as possible locally but often the churches have to give help too. These canteens are not only saving children from deformity through undernourishment but they also provide a focus round which their parents can meet and talk without fear.

their message can be understood anywhere in the world.

These rag pictures come out of poverty. They depict the brutalities and suffering the ordinary people have had to endure from reactionary rulers. They show them in detail. But in doing so they take none of the inhumanity, rigidity and coldness of their oppressors. They can express serious sorrow and at the same time be full of imagination and spirit. In the patchworks this comes out in the brilliant colours, and also in the witty and poetic way the scraps of patterned, mass-produced fabric have been used. Not only the subject, but the whole way they are made is like a message saying that the people will not be crushed and reduced to silence.

How did this movement begin?

The appearance of these patchwork pictures cannot really be separated from a very broad wave of cultural activity in Chile over more than ten years. It began before Allende came to power and continues today despite the intense efforts of the present government to crush it. It has always had a popular character. It

"In every one there are human figures, especially children, because what you see more than anything in the shanty-towns are children. What we show always has to do with people."



This apparently light-hearted circus picture is actually a detailed satire on the junta's economic policies. Bottom left: the four clowns of the ruling junta show off the vaunted *despegue economico* (economic take-off as advocated by the US reactionary economist Milton Friedman) which in fact was a dismal failure. Bottom right: the 'illusionary magic' of the promise to provide food for the people (the junta's Economics Ministry is popularly known as the Ministry of Illusions). Top left: the DINA trying to put the Chilean workers under the lash. And top right: the woman at home in the kitchen, carrying her shopping basket, is walking the tightrope of survival.



The three poplar trees always refer to the Tres Alamos prison camp, which is 'open' in the sense that the political prisoners can receive visitors. The buildings on the left are the closed prisons or the secret places where 'disappeared' prisoners are taken. A road, lined with barbed wire, leads from this bitter present, through solidarity and hope, to the future.

"The colours are always chosen for contrast. Often they are not exactly as we want because we lack materials, but we always try to do it that way. I use darker colours when it's winter or I'm showing something sad . . . then everything is grey and cloudy. When the weather is good we put the sun and more lively colours. If the subject is happy, we make the colours of the people very beautiful."

has been linked with a movement of masses of people against the conditions, physical and mental, of "underdevelopment". Many popular art forms sprang up in Chile during the Popular Unity period, although they had little time to develop: the New Song Movement, street and field theatre, mural painting, publishing of popular educational books and magazines which reached enormous readerships for a Third World country, new-style comics, the revitalisation of handicrafts which were languishing, and so on.

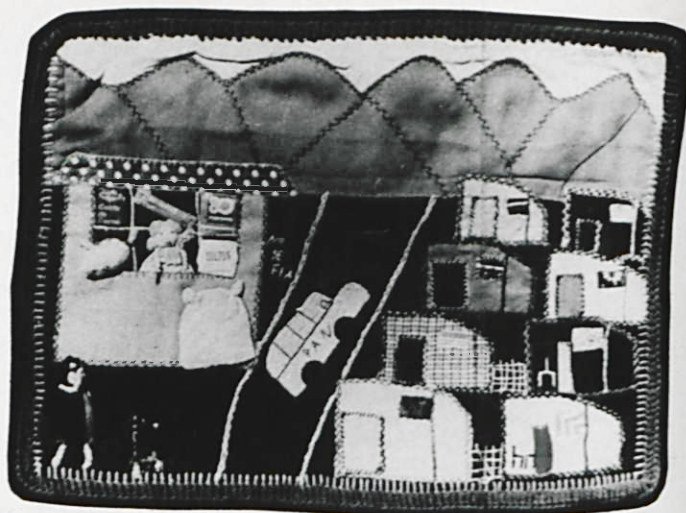
Among these crafts was one of making pictures from different coloured wools, which was specially admired and encouraged by the poet Pablo Neruda and by the folksinger and painter Violetta Para. This peasant art is the nearest antecedent to the present-day patchworks, but really the patchwork-makers have no formal tradition to draw on and express themselves in a direct and child-like way.

The strength of the cultural movement is clear from the way, under the extreme persecution of the right-wing junta, it has adapted itself and survived in new forms. People in Britain will have noticed how Chileans in exile have got together to form new music and theatre groups. Poems, plays, pieces of metal and wood-carving have found their way here even from inside Chilean prisons.

The first patchworks after the Coup in 1973 were made to denounce the junta and expose their crimes. It is hard to be sure exactly how it began, but most likely women political prisoners inside the jails and camps saw first the possibility of using an apparently innocuous form like the patchwork — so homely and "innocent" — as a means of protest. The movement quickly spread wider and wider. Patchwork-making became one of the forms of work organised in the shanty-towns to combat the massive unemployment produced by the junta's economic policies. Some of these workshops are organised by the people themselves and some by the Catholic Church, which in Chile has become increasingly opposed to the military government. Patchwork-making, like laundering and sewing, produces a minimal income for women to buy some sort of food and medicines for their children. At first they were sold inside Chile, now abroad as well at solidarity meetings and events.

Because people's survival depends on them, these workshops are carefully organised. Production has to be rationalised. They usually consist of not more than 20 women. A treasurer distributes the money obtained from sales. On the whole, money goes to the person whose work is sold; but everyone puts 10% into a common fund to be used for buying materials and for emergencies. The number of patchworks produced has to be controlled. Usually one person makes one a week, but "women in a bad situation are allowed to make more patchworks than others". At a weekly meeting the new patchworks are looked over and discussed by women in the group and generally judged against the following criteria: that they should be well-finished; that the forms should be well-composed; that the subject should be truthful, and really "say something".

In fact in the details of these pictures — sometimes disguised and "coded" because of censorship — is contained a whole chronicle of the lives of Chilean workers today, their problems,



The people of the shanty-towns can't afford to buy the food in the shops. *No se fia* — No credit. The woman with the child is covering her face with her hands. Before the military coup small shops like this extended weekly credit. Each person had a notebook in which their purchases were written down and the account was settled at the end of the week, after payday.

all the things that affect them most. You see the day of the Coup, the troops running wild in the streets; you see the prisons, especially from the point of view of women visiting their men, or trying to find out where they've been taken. You see all the problems of the shanty-town: the *comedors* (collective kitchens organised to feed the children); a woman going from house to house asking the neighbours to look after her child while she searches for work; children selling sweets along the main roads in order to survive; searching the dustbins at night for scraps of food; the cemetery crowded with family names. When the artists try to synthesise or sum up the situation, two definite tendencies appear. One is the religious explanation. Suffering is shown as a modern Way of the Cross; or, for example, a flock of sheep is shown attacked by an eagle. This is the style of lamentation. The other is the analysis of society and of class, the militant style. An example of this kind is the diagram-patchwork showing the dollar hovering over the Chilean economy. On the whole, there are few pictures which do not contain, in some segment, in some detail, an element of hope.

I mentioned before the "childlike" style of these pictures. The development of modern art has made people in Western countries receptive to the appeal of naivety in art. We have followed painters like Picasso and Klee as they adopted in their own work the spontaneous styles of untrained people, or of artists outside European traditions. This in turn has stimulated a market in which naive art has become a commodity, a fixed category which cannot be allowed to change. To look at the Chilean pictures from that point of view would be patronising and wrong. Their technique is what it is because of circumstances. To get to grips with reality, to go into it deeper, they have every reason to develop their expression. And in fact already certain details which might appear merely charming and naive (for example, the "farmyard" scene in the patchwork of the circus we have illustrated) are deliberate disguises for references to real people and places in Chile which cannot be openly shown. As well as this, the pictures contain many elements which are not dependent on a "primitive" mode of expression, indications of a popular, democratic art and attitude to life which can be found in any nation and can be expressed in any number of ways.

Even in the most elementary compositions there are still details which are given great exactness: for example, how manual work is done; "machines" which make life easier (e.g. the gas burners under the cauldrons of soup in the *comedores*); the playfulness of children; and always as a background, in any number of colours, the Andes, the magnificent mountains which surround the city of Santiago and stretch like a backbone through the whole of Chile.

It could be called a matter of dignity, of one's conception of oneself as a human being, which leads the people making these patchworks, however bitter the subject, to use all the art they know, to bring out the hidden qualities and beauty in the thrown-



The US dollar lording it over the workers and production of Chile. Chile's main products appear in the small circles around the centre (e.g. copper, shoes, textiles, foodstuffs, etc.). On the edge are figures of workers, factories, fields and mines disrupted and closed by the junta's policies. The four members of the junta appear as sinister bats.

"We don't have money or anything else. We have to go out and collect the scraps of material around the factories. That's how we make them and afterwards people buy them . . . Each time we make them better. It has to be like that because we live from them, it's the only way we have to survive, otherwise nothing at all would come to the house."



The four black birds are the four hated members of the military junta.



The life of the children in Chile today. The road seems to split their life in two. Below they play in the water from a fire hydrant, and, above, they struggle to survive by selling sweets to the occupants of buses and cars along the Avenida Matta, one of Santiago's busiest streets.



At night in the shanty-towns mothers are searching the dustbins for food. 70% of children in Chile today are undernourished.

away scraps of material:

"Apart from all this, it's a great joy that people consider that we are making art, that we are artists in this. For us, as housewives, we've never been, or dreamt of being, artists or working in that sort of thing. In this there's some compensation for all that's happened. It gives us more strength to go on, to go on struggling to live. God willing, we'll be able to make them better every day."

The shanty-town itself has a double character. The poverty of the houses is not glossed over, the single crude lavatory of the whole settlement is shown, even that it's full of flies. But other details are included with pride: a table and chairs inside each house, flowers, the electric street lamps and their cables. And there are always people. The way the shanty-town is depicted carries the message that the people must advance step by step from the real situation they are in, and that their advance must be a common one that all benefit from.

There is no rhetoric in these pictures, and very rarely is an expression isolated and carried to extremes. All the undertones and incidentals in the patchworks give an impression of tremendous reserves of strength, of a kind of balance and resilience in the people, in the face of the worst the authorities can do. □

Guy Brett would like to thank those who lent patchworks to be photographed, and the many people who gave him information for this article. He hopes Chilean friends will point out any inaccuracies or misunderstandings of interpretation.

An exhibition of the patchworks opens on October 26 at Third Eye Centre, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow 1, and in London later in the autumn.

Full colour postcards of the patchworks are available from Chile Committee for Human Rights, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1. Price 10p each or £1.10 for 12, enclose s.a.e.

Why I decided to have a baby

Terry Slater says why she chose to have a baby — how did it fit in with her feminist politics and personal life? This starts a new occasional series in which women explain significant choices and changes they've recently made: for example, to join the Communist Party, to become a separatist, to get married again, to be celibate. We hope the articles will help work out questions many women are asking themselves as a result of their involvement in women's liberation.



MICHAEL ANN MULLEN



At 21 I wanted to get married and have a baby. At 23 I wanted to have a career and have a baby. At 25 I wanted to live in a commune and have a baby. Then I got involved in left-wing politics, the women's movement; it was no longer O.K. to want a baby. It became a secret and shameful urge which sank into the background and lurked there uneasily. It was not till 30 loomed on the horizon that I finally decided I couldn't leave it any later, that I wanted a baby even if the time was not completely right and even if I had to struggle for it. Almost two years later my baby was born, she is now just beginning to crawl. I still don't fully understand what has been drawing me all these years towards motherhood in spite of obstacles and contradictions — I'm hoping that writing this will be a way for me to work it out...

I think at 21 I wanted a baby because it was what was expected of me — in fact it was the only thing I could think of to do with my life. Fortunately my "boy-friend" wouldn't hear of babies or marriage, because he was scared of getting involved. I say 'fortunately' because I am now very glad I didn't have babies at that age; I would have put everything into my children, I would have let them drain my energy and confidence and take over my life before it had even started.

Instead I worked at a job and got a bit more sussed about things. I realised that as things were, I would make a terrible mother; since I had nothing much else going for me and needed a child to make me feel 'someone', I would end up very dependent on the child, I would eat

it alive and really screw it up. I began to think of ways of having a baby which would ease that dependency and give both baby and mother a bit more space. Living collectively seemed one answer. I moved through different living situations, trying income-sharing, collective work projects, sleeping with other men as well as the one I was with, and I realised that in the back of my mind I was partly looking for a situation that it would feel O.K. to have a kid in — where I would not end up isolated and dependent on "husband" and "baby".

I didn't find the situation I was looking for, but I am very glad for those years. I discovered that I could work at a straight and difficult job in a man's world, that I could write a bit, that I enjoyed dancing, working politically in groups with other people, and that my relationships with other women were really important and valuable to me. I feel that by the time I got pregnant I had built up a strong enough sense of who I am and what I can and want to do, so

that even if a lot of it disappears under a pile of nappies for a while, I will survive with the strength and confidence to be myself. I know that other women, friends of mine, have done it the other way round — they have had children and then got into doing things — but I am afraid that it might not have worked for me, that I would have gone under like my sister who I see struggling to keep any sense of identity in the face of her husband and kids.

When I first got active in left-wing politics it was such a high — working, doing things creatively with other people — that I really got into my own energy and forgot for a while about having a baby. But when I finally joined a left political group it also became clear that politics and babies didn't go together. In those hopeful days after 1968 we felt that the political work which needed doing was so urgent that our own needs

— including our need to have kids — were a distraction and even “counter-revolutionary”. In this we set a different standard for ourselves as “revolutionaries” from “ordinary people”, who had children.

There was also an idea around which I picked up, that I shouldn't want my *own* children: there are so many other children in the world needing attention, what is wrong with sharing and looking after other people's children? — it's only possessive to want your own. The women's movement didn't make it easy to have a baby either; in women's groups I seemed to pick up the idea that women who had already started a family before the movement needed supporting, but no woman in her right mind would now actually consciously decide to have a baby — not now that we had realised what a trap and what a con the mother's role is. From everywhere I got the idea that it was not right to want a baby. So my desire for a baby was redirected: I became closer to women friends who were having babies; I looked after the children of women in the collective I lived in; I got closer to my sister's kids; and I helped organise a self-help play-group with women in the area who had toddlers.

Then at Christmas 1974 the tide turned. I don't quite know what changed things, why I suddenly launched again into a campaign to have a baby myself. Partly I had a series of disappointments with other people's children: playgroup babies moved out of the area, my sister's kids, who I had begun to love a lot, were moved back abroad. . . . I realised that these children all had their own mothers who would always be closer to them and who, when it came to the crunch, had the power to take them away. The only way to have a continuous relationship with a child would be to have one myself. It was also that our politics were becoming clearer; all of us in our collective were realising how we disagreed with the political group we belonged to. For example we were not so into “serving the masses” for the sake of a future revolution, but were more keen on fighting for what we needed for ourselves now, living our own lives and organising around that. I didn't want to be a full-time all-purpose revolutionary “cadre”, somehow above and outside the class struggle; I wanted to live and fight around my own life, like “ordinary” people. It became politically O.K. for me to want something for myself, and one of the things I wanted was a baby.

I was also starting to question some of the ideas I seemed to pick up in the women's movement that it would be a mistake or a cop-out to get pregnant. I began to question the idea that my liberation lay in being stronger and doing more things in the world *at the expense of* other experiences open to me and to all other women. Bearing children has been made into a source of women's oppression, but it doesn't have to be; it is in fact

an amazing gift which women have that lots of men envy, it shouldn't be put down and rejected. Like “female intuition” and women's crafts such as embroidery, it needs to be recognised in a new way. I didn't want to play a traditional mother's role for the rest of my life, but nor did I want to be denied what looked like a really rich and loving experience. I wanted the women's movement to mean that I had more opportunities open to me, not less. My body has the potential to bear children just as it has the potential to run, swim, dance, make love . . . I wanted to explore them all. (I remember telling my sister that I wanted a baby because it was an experience open to me, and she replied, “So's jumping off the Empire State Building; you don't have to do either.”)

There were a lot of less rational emotions at work in me as well. I had the phantom of 30 looming up ahead of me, and I felt that soon it would be too late; that it is not so safe to have a baby after 30, that my life was running out. I knew I wanted children to be part of my life in the long term, that I need the warmth, directness, energy and anarchism which I find in my relationships with kids. I had a vision of myself at 40, feeling alone and barren — maybe strong, successful at whatever I was doing, creative — but with a big hole in my heart, chasing hopelessly after other people's children. This was the kind of fantasy which made me start to feel desperate about having a child.

I was still very aware that I was not really ready for it: I had done several years of therapy in leaderless groups and I felt less neurotic, more of a whole person, more confident and together in my relationships and my dealings with the world, but I knew I still had a long way to go before I could be really clear in my relationship with a child. I just felt — I'm never going to be the perfect mother — if I wait for the “right” time and the “right” situation I could wait forever.

In some ways my living situation was quite suitable to have a baby: I was still with the same man and we had been living for over a year in this collective which included small children, and there was quite a lot of shared child-care. The collective was a group of men and women who shared living, therapy and political activities around the area where we lived. In another way it was a very unsuitable situation for me to have a baby, because we were involved in sleeping with more than one person; it was like a web of multiple relationships in the house with a lot of jealousy. Ironically, I think that partly drove me towards a baby: the two men I was involved with had been sleeping with women close to me and I think I suddenly felt that I was special to no one. Instead of freaking out about it, I unconsciously redirected that energy into the baby — as someone who would love me and be close to me even if no one else

was. I wasn't aware of this at the time, but looking back I think it was partly a competitive or angry gesture, a way of saying to them all, “I don't need you, you can't hurt me, I'll have a baby who I'll really love and be close to instead, you'll see . . .”

The way I set about it was very naive. I announced at a collective meeting that I wanted to have a baby. I imagined that it would be a collective decision, that people would say “Great, we'll all help . . .” Instead, people were clearly against it. The men didn't want the responsibility, the women were jealous, for varying reasons. It seemed the mention of babies brought up a lot of feelings in people, and no one was in a situation to cope with it. I went away feeling resentful; every other woman in the world can have a baby, why can't I?

I changed to the cap from the pill, which I had been taking for ten years. My anger at not having a baby was focussed on the cap, it hurt me and I hated it every time I put it in. My relationship with the other man I had got involved with seemed too insecure to support a pregnancy and a baby. My main energy went towards getting pregnant by the same bloke I had been with and had wanted a child from so many years before. It felt a bit different now; before I had wanted *his* baby, I had imagined a miniature version of him, but now I wanted *my* baby as an experience for myself and as part of exploring possibilities in my life. He said he wanted a baby but not yet, he wasn't ready and there were things he wanted to do in his life first. I thought, it's all right for him, he can have a child up to the age of 60. I refused to use the cap, he refused to make love; I stormed out in rage in the middle of the night . . .

Months passed. My resentment grew. Our relationship deteriorated. For a while I couldn't make love with him at all. We nearly split up. He was still sleeping with another woman in the house and that situation was getting very strained. There was a collective housing re-shuffle; I moved in to live with another woman. All this time my campaign to get pregnant went on; I was still pushing and arguing. Then I decided to give up the idea only to find I was unconsciously “forgetting” to put the cap in at unexpected times. At some point he realised that if I didn't conceive from him soon, it would not be his baby. We were getting on incredibly badly; I felt I had lost touch with even wanting his child. The conception passed me by and at first I was not 100% sure who was the father.

I remember at the pregnancy test clinic, before they gave me the result they sat me down to cushion the shock; they were amazed at my joy because they were used to people needing abortions. I left dancing along the street. I was naive. Though I never lost the joy, I had not realised what effects the



pregnancy and birth would have. I knew that I would be able to do less, I was ready for that and have been able to manage quite well on that score. What I was not ready for was the effect it had on my relationships.

From quite early on it seemed that the pregnancy was not compatible with multiple relationships; I ended up in a monogamous couple and quite isolated. Several of my women friends withdrew, feeling hurt, cut out, jealous, sad because they wanted a baby themselves or because they felt I wouldn't have time or energy for them any more. The father had quite similar experiences with his friends. Once I had finally got pregnant he was very pleased and happy, and it was good the two of us spending time together during the months of pregnancy; but I had not realised quite how much we would be thrown back on top of one another. For the first time for several years we moved in to live "together", with another man. I had the kind of pregnancy they describe in the books — radiant, feeling very peaceful and "at one" with my huge body. I also had a fairly natural and conscious birth and fell into a very happy relationship with my baby. But through it all — and it is a very emotional time — I felt I was mourning the relationships I had lost through choosing to have her.

Sitting exhausted at 5am with a baby on the tit, I sometimes found things quite tragic. I needed mothering and I seemed to have lost several of the friends who were close to me before; people have pointed out that these changes in relationships are what they mean when they say a baby changes your life. I also found that my ideas about motherhood did not leave much space for a father. Feeling weak and disorientated for some time after the birth, I was very grateful for his loving support, but at the same time I could not adjust to this new dependency and began to feel trapped. I loved sharing and enjoying the baby with him, and needed his help looking after her, but had not realised how much more than that he would want. Once he had accepted the idea of having a baby, he really got into it and wanted to have an equal relationship with her. (In that case, do equal childcare, I said, but it's hard when you're

breast-feeding, he said, arguments continue . . .)

Though other people in the collective helped a lot with childcare at first, I badly missed the kind of day to day contact with women that you get from living in the same house. But when I suggested I move to a women's house very close nearby, he was upset and said, O.K. as long as the baby lived with him. I was shocked. I realised that in my heart of hearts I thought of her as more my baby than his, and I realised what the equal relationship meant. We were all three stuck together. I couldn't leave her, I couldn't take her away from him . . . this came up every time I wanted to go out. It also made me wonder what would happen in the long term, supposing we ever wanted to split up? Would she commute between us like other kids do between separated parents, which is very upsetting for everyone? The only alternative seems to be to stay together forever, which might be O.K., but at this point it fills me with dread to see my life mapped out — I get flashes of a semi-detached house, children round the breakfast table, family holidays, getting more dependent and stifled year by year . . . This fantasy gets stronger as the collective has started to disintegrate and it becomes clear that it's hard for single or childless people to live with a couple and a baby. But I have still not given up the idea of collective living.

Another surprise was how having a child affected things between me and my family. I thought that for once I was doing something that my mother could relate to, and I had a fantasy that she would react to my pregnancy with an intuitive warmth. Inside myself I feel closer to her: the whole experience has put me more in touch with parts of myself which are like her — parts I had rejected and put down — and I get flashes of my childhood with her . . . but we don't seem able to behave very differently towards each other. Instead of intuitive warmth she has mostly given me a lot of advice and a lot of things for the baby. I do get treated with more approval by family and people like that, which is surprising because it almost seems as if having a baby is more important than getting married. On the tube and in shops old ladies smile at me, and men who would previously have made sexually aggressive remarks seem to find me much less threatening. A mother and baby is much more socially acceptable than a lone single woman, and as I walk down the street with my pushchair it dawns on me that there is a lot of power in having a child.

There are many other things I had not realised about children, not just the power they bring, but also the rewards. I always thought of my friends with kids — "Poor So-and-So, she has so much work/needs help looking after the children . . .", and there is a lot of work for sure, but you also get a lot of warmth and support from

children. I had felt this a bit in my friendships with other people's children, but I had not realised what a source of strength and joy it can be to have a really close and committed relationship with a baby from birth on. They give you so much love.

Writing this article I have been trying to work out what has been driving me to have a child, what has made it worthwhile for me — although there have been difficulties and in the short term I seem to have lost quite a lot. Other mothers have given me various reasons: someone to look after you in old age; it's easier to "fit in" and be part of the world if you have a child; it's part of belonging to natural cycles of life and death; and one friend just told me she wanted someone to love and be loved by. When I heard those reasons, they all seemed to fit for me too. I don't know exactly how I would have explained it for myself. When I am low and down on myself I feel that perhaps even now I really needed a baby to fill some empty gap inside me — a kind of deep loneliness which needed that baby tenderness and skin to skin contact with someone who doesn't go away (you're never alone with a baby). When I am feeling cheerful and O.K., I see it a different way; that having a baby has been a way of exploring and re-owning part of myself, of somehow reliving and reshaping my own childhood and through it perhaps getting a bit more mature. Of course I have many years to regret it (the novelty must wear off a bit), but at the moment I feel good about her growing up and I imagine having more children too; not with the same "try anything once" attitude I had this time, but because I know the experience of pregnancy, birth and baby is one I wouldn't have missed, and I'd like to do it again.

Reading through what I have written here I see that there is a lot of bitterness in it as if I want to blame other people for making it hard for me to have the baby. Of course that is ridiculous because there is no question of "right" or "wrong". People who have not been into babies have been at a different place in their life — just as I have moved between different places — doing jobs, learning things politically, working things out in different ways. All those phases are as valid as having babies. If it comes to that, there are people who I have hurt by my decision to have a baby — and I couldn't help that either. It happened like other big decisions I have made in my life — leaving my job, relationships ending — although it meant a lot of pain and difficulty there was a point when it became the only thing I could do, the way I knew instinctively I had to move and grow. It has made my life richer and even if things have been hard over these two years, I hope that over the total span of my life I will not regret it and will be glad that I didn't throw out the baby with the bathwater. □



NUTS TAKE A BATTERING IN SEX ATTACK ON ED.

Dear Editor,

I would like to draw your attention to the Clog Cogs advert which recently appeared in Craggs 6. I enclose a copy of it and would like to point out the extremely sexist nature of the ad.

Funny, yes — but in its implications for the treatment of women, very serious indeed. Is it not possible for Craggs to lead the field by refusing to accept such advertising? This really disappoints me about what is otherwise an extremely good magazine.

I hope you will be able to refuse to print such adverts in the future.

J F HARTLEY, Manchester.

My Dear,

We like the advert. I am sorry but we are beyond salvation and are likely to get naughtier. Ed.

From Craggs, a rock climbing magazine.
Editor Geoff Birtles, 34 Folds Crescent,
Sheffield.
Sent in by Jean Hartley, Manchester.

UNBORN BLONDES (and brunettes)
prefer doctors who don't kill
them—LIFE (0926 21587).
LUCRATIVE commission offered to

OXF
2
AUG
W
CO

An advertisement by anti-abortion group
"Life" in The Times August 6.
Sent in by Marion Bowman, Manchester.

TOOTH & NAIL

WHO TO ATTACK ABOUT SEXIST ADS:

the manufacturers of the product
advertised and/or the agency who
make up the ad.

WHO TO COMPLAIN TO:

The Independent Broadcasting
Authority, for ITV ads and pro-
grammes, 70 Brompton Road,
London SW9. The Advertising
Standards Authority, though
notoriously unresponsive to
complaints about sexism, 15
Ridgemount Street, London WCL.

Please keep sending sexist
cuttings, photos, quotes
and advertisements to
'Tooth and Nail', includ-
ing all details which may
be needed by people
wanting to fight back.

WHO TO WORK WITH:

AFFIRM (Alliance For Fair
Images and Representation in
Media). A group acting against
sexism and offensive stereotyping,
can be contacted at 35 Colehearn
Road, London SW10.

THE NATIONAL UNION OF
JOURNALISTS. Send a letter of
complaint about sexist material
to: The Mother or Father of the
NUJ Chapel at the publication
concerned, with a copy to the
editor, and to the Equality Work-
ing Party, NUJ Acorn House, 314
Grays Inn Road, London WCL.

homosexual son means no grand-
children—but on the plus side it
also means no daughter-in-law!

Many are the frustrated older
women who have grandchildren
but, because of being on less than
good terms with their daughters-
in-law, see them very rarely. At
least the mother of a homosexual
son knows that she'll always be
the first woman in his life.

You've asked what causes
homosexuality and so, by implica-
tion, whether it can be prevented.
Well, I can't tell you. No-one
knows for sure what the causes
are—though theories have
abounded.

From Claire Rayner in Woman's Own.
Sent in by Gillian Howard and David Gilchrist, Leeds.

SJ: What else can The Pill do;

DM: Research in Australia is showing that women who have been on The Pill
for five years or more have a marked increase in their masculine drive. These
women are to be found in the more extreme sectors of Women's Liberation
and also in industry. I think this is worrying to us as mothers because of the
effect it can have on family life. I have heard recently from an osteopath of
women on The Pill who are producing bony outgrowths, for instance a rib
in the neck...

From "More Thoughts on The Pill" in the National Childbirth Trust's bulletin.
Sent in by Sue Brown, Leamington Spa.

Barrister's Diary

imprisonment. Whether it would be a
solution to the particular problem which is
troubling WAR, namely rape and assaults
on women, is another matter. In the chase
after the phantom of liberation western
women have thrown off the defences which
custom and manners gave them. It is
doubtful whether the law alone can save
them from the consequences of their
greater vulnerability. Within the last
generation we have been told that women
stand, or should stand, on an equal sexual

from Guardian Gazette, a Law Society publication

The £70 p.w. job MEN DON'T WANT and GIRLS DO BETTER

Key-Punching is a job you can learn in just five weeks, and a top
operator can reach £70 p.w. after a spell in the computer industry.

Men prefer other jobs in computers. So that leaves the field clear for
girls who want to help progressive companies everywhere improve
their efficiency: airlines, fashion houses, advertising agencies, tour
operators, government departments and others who use computers.

What IS key-punching? Simply a method of preparing information for
a computer. Using a machine rather like a typewriter.

With or without 'O' levels LCTS teach you key-punching in just five
weeks. Next thing you know, our FREE placement service is helping to
find you job opportunities worldwide, starting at £32 p.w. and rising to
£70 p.w.

Find out more, without obligation. Post the coupon today for your
FREE brochure.

an advertisement in Honey magazine sent in by Morag Cummings

I'M A WORKING CLASS WOMAN ✚OK.

What do you think determines your class background?
How do you feel about it? Angry, guilty?
How do your attitudes about work/money compare
with those of your parents?
Who earned the money in your family? How much? Was
it stable?
What kind of neighbourhood did you live in?
Do you know how to 'use the system'?
How does that affect your understanding and control
of the Women's Liberation Movement?
Anny Brackx talks with six working class feminists
about class.



Evelyn

Isobel

Tasha

Why a working class women's group?

Evelyn: I have been in the women's movement for about five years now and it has been impossible ever to talk about class. I had plenty of private conversations about it, but those conversations were a bit like the conversations I had before I was a feminist. Like you're beginning to feel oppressed as a woman and you're trying to talk, explain to people and they keep dismissing you. It all seems very frustrating, until you can get together with other women. And then the basis of your discussions is that you all know that you're oppressed as women. And it's then you actually start to move. It was the same trying to talk about class.

Hilary: I came along to the group last year, because I had tried over the years to get into the women's movement, both in Toronto and London, and I had never been able to get very far because I always felt that it was an essentially middle class movement. I agreed with what the women's movement was saying and doing, but once I went to meetings and mixed I found the whole atmosphere oppressive. It was similar to hearing of a left-wing political group and its aims, you're very enthusiastic, you go along and you find that you cannot join in because lefty young men are doing most of the talking and it doesn't seem to have any reference to you at all. In the women's movement, meetings were held in a middle class vocabulary and manner, and this was what was ostracising me.

Judy: It's the first political group within the women's movement that I've stayed in.

In the beginning of the women's liberation movement we thought that women could get together on the basis that women's oppression by men is universal, kind of straddling all classes. Would you disagree with this idea now?

Isobel: Yes, but there are still women at the bottom. Like Hilary I went to meetings and there was a hell of a lot of jargon and political analysis that I didn't have. I mean I came into the women's liberation movement because I felt oppressed as a woman, and I felt quite out of it, not being able to discuss things in eloquent terms. I also felt put upon for being silent in meetings.

How would you define your working class-ness?

Hilary: It's a little like being asked to define your femaleness. We just feel working class.

Judy: Jesus, you cannot sit down and say it's this, this, this and this because it's a million and one things that happen every day. What I try to say to some women is "I am working class and it's not just a matter of you sharing your money with me, or you stopping to listen to what I've got to say; I want you to see that, that's what I am, that's where I come from, so it's affected me in so many ways."

Evelyn: I've sat around in lots of discussions and it often comes through that a lot of middle class feminists have actually not mixed with working class people very much. Then you get all these attitudes coming out like the working classes are not very bright,

don't know how to handle their money, a bit loud, noisy, aggressive, embarrassing; and when that kept going on I just began to feel that I was going to have to say something about it, because these sorts of attitudes are coming from so-called radical women, and they're real stereotypes.

Hilary: One of the things that amazed me, when I went to the last women's liberation conference in April this year, was that three or four women in the workshop on working class women stated that they had always assumed that the women's movement was chiefly for working class women because they were the most oppressed. I don't think this is true. There's one way in which I don't think we are the most oppressed. Inside the economic structure we frequently hold jobs which are much nearer in wage-earning to our husbands, sons or brothers. Most middle class women don't usually have jobs on a par with their bank manager husbands and their director sons. Working class women are used to speaking inside the family and have a certain economic power backing them up. A lot of middle class women have hardly any source of power behind them. In many circumstances they don't even go out to work; they are at home in suburbs or wherever.

Isobel: I didn't quite follow. I'm sorry, I must be really dim. I don't feel that working class women, even within their family, hold an awful lot of power, except maybe emotional, sort of tribal power. I don't think they hold much economic power at all.

For socialists the word class means economic class; for radical feminists it means women as a class as opposed to men. How do you see it?

Evelyn: Some of us here are socialists; some of us are not; one woman here is a separatist; our politics are all very different actually. What we have got in common is that we're all feminists and we all have working class backgrounds. It's true that women share a common oppression, but then once you understand that, it's very important to work out and understand what our differences are as well, if we're going to exist as a movement. I mean class in terms of behaviour, attitudes, education, the resources you've got, mobility, all that kind of thing, becomes crucial when you get women together without men. I think classless-ness is one aspect of middle class-ness actually and I really think it's holding the women's movement back; the middle class women don't realize that. Let's face it, the ruling class never thinks it's classless and working class people don't think they're classless. The role of the middle classes is to organise the working class for the rulers. Their values, their education, their little bit of property and power are all to that end. How many middle class women know that and have faced it, in themselves? Parity begins at home, right?

Do you feel you have more in common with working class women who aren't in the movement than with middle class feminists?

Tasha: It's a divisive question... In terms of ideas I feel closer to middle class women in the movement, but emotionally I feel far

more for working class women outside the movement. That's a sort of gut reaction. And when you say, which do you feel closer to, I find, I cannot say... I just wish I could discuss those ideas with, like, a woman in the baker shop; I wish I knew how to start talking about that to her without fucking sounding patronising and talking like a middle class woman. And I just don't know how to because the ideas are all in middle class language. I feel split. It's very difficult to translate the ideas and to take from your guts and then to bring it out.

Evelyn: The way we talk is very important to people. I have been in situations with middle class feminists, who really haven't had much to do with working class people, and they were trying to explain ideas to working class women not in the women's movement. I find it embarrassing, because they are patronising, because they don't have the same language.

Isobel: I feel pretty much over a barrel on that as well. Like I go home and try to talk to my mother, who is working class and who feels totally threatened by me — the ideas I come out with, and the language I use. And on the other hand, I feel threatened by the language that's used in feminist meetings. But I am trying to work on it.

Tasha: I brought some friends back to see my father and I felt that they were putting him down. He may be a man, but he's my father, and he's working class and I feel that they've had far more chances in life than he's ever had. That's something that's really important about class: the chances, the choices, expectations and mobility, being able to have the space that everyone's always talking about. Space to do things... My father's never had fucking space, manoeuvrability. He's never been able to choose this or that or that. I feel incredibly split when I'm with middle class feminists and my father's there, cos I know that I feel far more empathy for him than for her, my sister.

Evelyn: Yes, working class people like my mother and father have no control over their lives whatever. Completely sort of tied to work and when I've seen middle class feminists put men down, using class to do it, it makes me feel uncomfortable; it makes me wonder how they react to other women when they're threatened or angry. Are they going to attack working class women using class to try and keep control of situations? When working class women are being assertive, about class say, out come the old standards: you're insensitive, you don't care; you're illogical; you don't make the right connections, and so on.

Tasha: Within any oppressed group, you get some with more privileges than others. And if you have more privileges, then you can use them to oppress others who are in the same group. I've only recently given it the name of class. Before I felt like we always do as women: that it's all me, it's my inadequacy; you always turn it in on yourself.

Judy: Many women were putting down the working class women's group, so that you had to be fucking brave to come out as



working class. When I first wore the badge saying "I'm a working class woman OK" I had women come up to me and say: "Oh Judy, you're not one of them are you."

Evelyn: There was a lot of hostility ... amazing ...

Les: The first time I ever saw a working class women's badge I was at the women's liberation conference and I says: "What the fucking hell have you got to advertise the fact that you're working class for ...?" I was quite angry, because it was a question I had to face myself with. I had to define myself then.

Judy: And you're so used to hiding the fact that you're working class ...

Why and how did you hide it?

Judy: Well, I got a scholarship and I went to university in Australia and there it's even more selective than what it is here. And everybody around me was middle class. I just couldn't relate to these people at all. And I spent all the time trying to pretend I was like them; getting myself so messed up in the head, and feeling really inadequate.

Tasha: I know so many many times, up to quite recently, when people asked me where I was born I'd mumble "Whitechapel". You know it wasn't a trendy place at the time.

Evelyn: It is now.

Tasha: Yeah, they've even taken that over, the fuckers. And then what's your father

do? and I sort of say "Well, he was in catering ..." Like I mean he washed dishes. And oh God the tension inside you.

Evelyn: People were very hostile and said it was irrelevant; we were being divisive; we were paranoid; all the kind of labels that the left put on women.

Isobel: I look at myself as being a socialist feminist. And you know with the climate of things at the moment, I don't feel as if a middle class movement that is pretending all these other things aren't happening is going to achieve much. You know the Suffragists, they were totally divided about class and I know they were divided over Ireland. I feel there are whole areas of brick walls within the women's movement that people refuse to look at. Ireland is one of them, working class women is another. You cannot really call this movement revolutionary if it's not gonna look at the seeds of these discontents.

Tasha: The whole world's in a state of crisis and if there is a revolution soon it's gonna be along class lines, because we haven't got it together yet to make a feminist revolution. And I just wonder you know how women will stand when that happens.

Judy: But say there is a revolution along class lines, what are you going to do? I mean, you're a woman, a feminist.

Tasha: But that's gonna be immaterial, because I'm not gonna be on the side that's wearing the uniforms. In no way can I be.

Judy: You see I'm not prepared to fight for men's things.

Tasha: But it's not just men's things. International capital affects everybody and women most of all. When things get tough economically, women are the first to suffer. And that's why we have to know exactly where we do stand and that we have an analysis of what's happening.

Isobel: That's why we need to consolidate any link we have with Irish women now, to put over a feminist perspective to them, cos they're at the bottom of the shitpile and they are involved in a very heavy class struggle. We got the opportunity to do it now. Ireland is a working class issue, it is also an educative feminist issue ... I really do feel the need to educate, to just put a different perspective to women.

If a middle class woman used the word educate, wouldn't you jump on her and say "We don't want to be fucking educated by you"?

Judy: If a middle class woman's got something to teach me, so long as she doesn't teach me in a patronising way, then I really want to learn. And she has got things to teach me.

Evelyn: I found it's almost all the other way, because of this whole drop-out syndrome; you get middle class women who are really highly educated and got all sorts of knowledge that actually I'd like to have access to, who are pretending they haven't got it. You know because they feel guilty about their education.

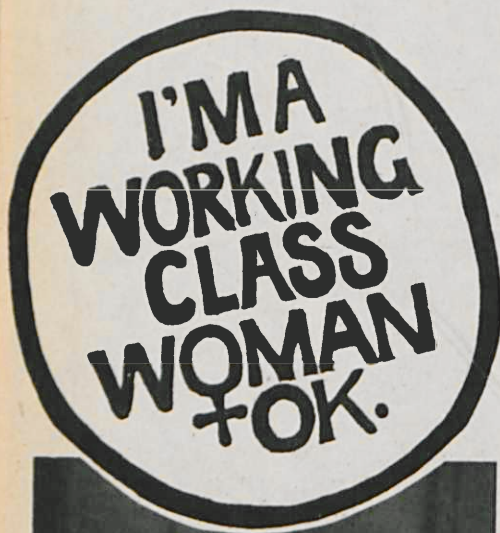
Les: I can give you an example of something along the same lines. I'm working, I have a steady income - I am a welfare officer. If I go to a pub and I've got a middle class woman come up to me, who's got money in the bank but not ready cash, and she says "lend me a pound, lend me ten pound, I haven't got any money", I think to myself, "well, has she any money or hasn't she?" And silly sod me hands out the bloody money and I never get it back. Not that it is important to me, the fact that I'm lending it. It's that they use me because they are trying to come down to my level. It's an example of how they're trying to act in a manner that I'm supposed to be used to; you know, nudge nudge, wink wink, they've got something in common with me, because they're pretending to be poor. It's a very popular sort of image, you know.

Evelyn: A friend of mine, who's middle class actually was saying to me the other day that she thinks that dropping out, squatting, not having any money, being on SS, all that ... is like the young middle class people's finishing school of the seventies ... radicalising them. Also I think, when you talk about jobs and money, you have to talk about class, because if you got a woman say like Judy, who's doing a cleaning job, who's never had any easy money, no resources, no way of getting money and then you got another woman who might be living on the dole, but you know she's got this whole background and all sorts of resources. Those things have to be taken into account. I don't see why a woman like Judy, with no resources, should subsidize anybody who has got money.

Judy: What struck me was that middle class women can cross class lines to get money but I know, if I need to borrow money, I can only get it from a working class woman. Working class women seem to be the ones who make sure that they've got some money, because you feel you've got to have something behind you; you've got to be getting something each week; enough to survive on, and a bit more. It's a security thing. It comes from you childhood you know, your parents ... They'd save money to buy something and then that's gone, but then they start again.

Tasha: I have a horror of being absolutely without money because of my childhood; because my parents were so fucking poor and so often middle class women say "what are you scared of; you know money isn't security" and that's because they've had fucking financial security all their lives.

Evelyn: Yes we're insecure and we're ghetto-ised and there's lots of taboos; clocking in, clocking out again; no time to move, change, choose. We're powerless and regimented. I come from a very close-knit working class community in the East End of London and the taboos and conventions, and the pressure to conform there was absolutely tremendous. I mean it was the biggest fight of my life, not to be pushed into the whole expected way of life. People there were incredibly threatened and wary of me, because I was different. I was always having fights; fights with the other kids for

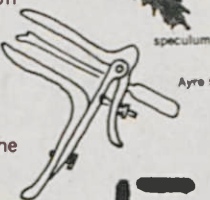
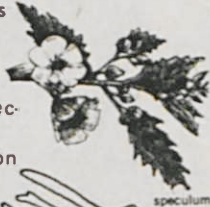
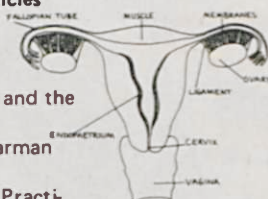


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example, because I was a bit different and because I wanted to be. I mean one of the things that I also found very difficult was the fact that I didn't have any privacy. You cannot retire somewhere and do your thing elsewhere; whatever you're doing everyone knows about it. The other kids knew what their lives were going to be, living in that place near the factories and the docks and all the rest of it. And they were very hostile to the fact that obviously I was intending or hoping to do something very different. My conflict was that the only way out is to go middle class, and that feels like a betrayal and that's how people see you. I won't patronise women like the ones I grew up with though, I'll make

excuses for them. And when middle class women do that, they not only wipe my struggle out, they wipe out any chances their working class sisters got for change. We're equals now. More than that, cos we know one of the faces of this society as few middle class women ever can. And that's our advantage, our power.

Tasha: It's being a working class lesbian that is difficult.

Les: It's fucking difficult enough being half black and half white and a lesbian and working class.

I wonder if it is significant that it's mostly lesbians that got together to discuss class.

Evelyn: Lesbians are a bit outside of society anyway. I mean I know quite a lot of working class women who call themselves feminists, but don't come anywhere near the women's movement. If you're a lesbian you need the women's movement, cos you are socially ostracised; working class people are very hostile to lesbians; there's not even the spot of token liberalism-alternative-society-bisexuality-is-the-latest-trend, what you get in the middle classes. It's out and out hostility; that's what I've experienced anyway, from my family and relatives and the rest of them. That's why we cannot do without the women's movement. So we just have to sort of stay and question things. □

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Doctor is cleared of sex assault in his surgery

Standard Reporter

FAMILY DOCTOR Arnold Hammond was today cleared of indecently assaulting a woman patient.

Dr Hammond, aged 50, had denied an allegation by 27-year-old art therapist S that he fondled her breasts at his surgery.

He said she clamped his hands to her breasts with her elbows as he was examining her and offered him "anything you fancy" in return for an abortion.

The jury at St Albans Crown Court took only 20 minutes to return a "not guilty" verdict.

Of Miss H the judge said: "By some standards her morals may leave something to be desired."

"She is a single girl and had already had two abortions in the National Health. This would have been the third."

She was registered for contraceptive pills. The defence claimed these facts showed she was not a girl of very high moral standards.

Dr Hammond's good character had been supported by several witnesses who described him as a devoted family man and a very professional and good doctor. There had been no other suggestions of any impropriety.

ACCUSING A DOCTOR OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Six women in and around the St Albans and Hatfield women's groups sent us this report about a local student who claimed sexual assault by her doctor. She was in touch with these women, who helped her while she was in court early in August. As in most rape cases, it was her morals that were on trial. After a smear campaign in the press, she lost her case.

On 29 September 1976 a 27-year-old student, thinking she might be pregnant, went to see her doctor in London Colney, Hertfordshire. Subsequently it turned out that she wasn't pregnant, but the doctor saw her during normal surgery hours and took a urine test. She says he told her to come back when surgery had closed and wait at the bus stop outside until his receptionist had left; he would then see her privately and "see what he could do to help". She claims that when she came back she was given an injection on the buttock, which the doctor later admitted was a placebo (given to humour rather than cure the patient) and practically useless in bringing on a late period unless injected in massive doses. She says she was told to undress, had her

breasts felt and then was told to masturbate or a second injection would not work. She says at this point she dressed, left the surgery and went to the police who, after questioning, agreed to press charges of indecent assault against the doctor.

When questioned by the police the doctor denied the evening assignment stating he had seen the woman only once. When told that friends had both taken her to the surgery and collected her, he said he remembered seeing her but didn't recollect the injection (despite the plaster on the woman's buttock). Closely pressed in court, he justified what he'd said alternatively as a panic measure, or to protect the woman or due to loss of memory.

What kind of health service do we want, what kind of relation between doctors, patients and administration?

These stories highlight two aspects of the problem

— how doctors regard the bodies of women who come to them for advice

— how hospital workers are resisting cuts in services we need.

Because anonymity does not apply to victims of sexual assault, the newspapers went to town and the woman's previous history, which included two NHS abortions found its way into the nationals — the fact that the father was the same both times did not — together with such gems of the defence case as "She looks as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth but her history tells a different story".

More damagingly the doctor's allegations that the woman had tried to seduce him, which in the admission of his own solicitor were not made until the case appeared before the Magistrates, have stuck too. The woman has now moved from our area to Manchester where she's working as an art therapist. We've been told that she is in danger of eviction from her flat unless she gets rid of the press on her doorstep!

Although no one at any time suggested why such a charge should have been made without foundation, and though the woman's statements were consistent throughout, the doctor's wife, his receptionist, the district midwife and the health visitor were brought to court as character witnesses. He was eventually acquitted by a jury who perhaps felt that safeguarding the career and reputation of a long-established GP was more important than the word of a woman of "not very high moral standing".

During the trial we got a lot of letters in the local papers criticising the sensational way they reported it and the sexism of the whole procedure. The only reply was from a man saying we were obviously all women's libbers and biased in her favour.

Now it's difficult to know how best to be sisterly and supportive, or what actions to take. The woman concerned doesn't want to get involved in a campaign because she feels such low energy now and can't face appealing, but she would be glad if other women took it up.

Women friends and sympathisers are thinking of demonstrating outside the courts on September 29, the day it happened last year. In the meantime we urge all women to do what they can to see that the anonymity which applies to raped women is extended to victims of sexual assault and to write to their MPs urging action on this. □

Contact Theresa Dempsey, Su Cannon or Jenny Greenfield at 22 Worley Rd, St Albans, Herts, (56-56085) to find out more about any action planned.

It is possible to take complaints about Doctors to the General Medical Council which supervises their morals. But usually a doctor, of either sex, is punished more severely for starting a voluntary sexual relationship with a patient than for undesired assaults, considered to be the imaginings of doctor-crazed women. □

Women are not costs to be cut!

Plaistow Maternity Hospital is threatened with closure — but not if the workers can stop it. The 63 bed hospital serves the most deprived area of Newham, East London, and if it closes, the nearest maternity unit will take up to 35 minutes to reach by ambulance. This means women and babies could die! At best the ambulance drivers are sure that more babies would have to be delivered on the way to hospital.

East London women are anyway at high risk of death either to themselves or to the baby, and of giving birth to a damaged child. Some of these tragedies occurred in the run-down buildings of Plaistow hospital. But a new unit isn't planned until 15 years from now. The workers know Plaistow Maternity isn't perfect, but they've taken it over to keep it open until the new unit is ready. They have formed an autonomous Action Committee: "We're union backed but not union controlled."

Dorothy Potter, in charge of publicity, emphasised that the hospital is turning no one away. They often get women newly-arrived in Britain, understanding little or no English, arriving on the doorstep in labour. They've had teenagers who weren't aware they were pregnant though on the verge of giving birth; all are treated sympathetically. "The staff here really care, that's why I want to keep it open."

The qualified staff say they'll stay as long as a woman or baby there needs nursing. Over half the local doctors have already pledged support by booking patients into the hospital after the closure date — this hasn't yet been made definite but will be in October. Nurses in the ante-natal clinic are also asking women to demand to have their babies in Plaistow. Ambulance drivers will refuse to redirect women to other hospitals without union approval.

Most of the staff live in the area, their children and in some cases their grand-children were born there and there's a strong community feeling. No one on the Area or Regional



LAWRENCE SPARHAM (UFL)



Work-in at Hounslow Hospital

Health Authorities or on the Hospital Management lives in Plaistow! To them local women are just figures and costs to be cut.

When the closure date comes, outside help will be vital:

- Picket to stop the removal of equipment. Please send your phone number to the Action Committee to build a telephone

tree so pickets can be called at short notice.

- Support the demonstration on October 1 assembling 12.30 at Ordnance Road opposite Rathbone Market, Canning Town.

- Send letters of support and money to the Action Committee, Plaistow Maternity Hospital, Howards Road, London E13. □ Gillian Anciano

LIZ HERON Nurses, other staff, trade union supporters, patients and local people march through the streets of Hounslow on August 31, the day their hospital was scheduled for closure.

The next day all but a few staff reported for work, in defiance of the Area Health Authority's instructions, determined to carry on the sit-in that started in March to keep the hospital open. Forty beds are now in use — above average for the summer — and the hospital is functioning efficiently.

Hounslow Community Health Council, which initially supported the planned closure, recently reversed its decision, because of the strength of local support. They now agree with the staff that Hounslow should be developed into a community hospital.

Liz Heron
Contact the Defence Committee,
Hounslow Hospital, Staines Rd,
Hounslow, Middx (01-570 4448).

'It makes

Liz Wyse interviews William Goldthorpe, Consultant Gynaecologist, who introduced the controversial ten-minute abortion at Tameside General Hospital (Manchester) and has just written about it in the British Medical Journal.

"We decided on the term ten-minute abortion because it attracts attention. You can call

Abortion

Below: A pregnant schoolgirl. What arguments can you think of for and against her having an abortion?



SEVENTEEN-year-old Sheila has gone to the clinic for the results of her pregnancy test. She is with the doctor in his consulting room.

Doctor: The results of the test are positive, Sheila. You're pregnant.

Sheila: Oh no!

Doctor: Now don't get upset. You are going to have to take a very important decision, so you must keep a cool head. Are you married or engaged?

Sheila: No.

Doctor: So you're going to have to decide on your own what you believe to be the best for yourself and your baby. There are two of you to think about now.

Sheila: I can't have the baby!

Doctor: Before you choose what to do, we must look at the alternatives.

Sheila: I'm too young to have a child!

Doctor: You've already shown very clearly that you're not too young to produce a baby. The question is what to do about it.

Sheila: I want an abortion!

Doctor: No doubt that seems to you a simple way to get rid of the problem, but I wonder if you realize exactly what an abortion involves?

Sheila: My friend had one, and she just paid £50 to a nursing home to have it done.

Doctor: I think she told you that I have since been treating her for depression. Destroying a baby is not simply a surgical operation. Emotions are important too. First, you must think of your own feelings. At the moment you are naturally upset—what you thought was impossible has happened. But when it's over, and you are no longer overwhelmed by fear and self-pity, you may regret having an abortion. Your body chemistry changes when you become pregnant, and the sudden termination of pregnancy can cause

bad reactions. This often leads to depression, as in the case of your friend.

Sheila: But I'd put up with anything not to have it.

Doctor: This is not a decision to be taken lightly. Even if you are sure of your own feelings, you must understand that the doctors and nurses who perform the operation were not trained in order to end life, but to save it. They frequently find this sort of work difficult to justify. If you do not want to keep the baby, you could still have it, but give it for adoption. I want you to tell your mother and discuss the matter with her. Come back to the clinic at the end of the week—with her if she will come—so that we can talk it over again. I want you to take the course of action that will cause least unhappiness. That is why I ask you to think again.

An important decision

1. What would you advise Sheila to do?
2. Should she ask her mother's advice, or is it a matter for her own conscience?
3. Do you consider abortion to be taking a human life?
4. Find out what the present law on abortion is in Britain. Should it be changed?

ABORTION BOOK PROTEST

Sheila is warned not to have an abortion because it often leads to depression. But about 80,000 women a year seek help in coping with post-partum (after birth) depression (see SR 47). One woman said, "The day I came home from hospital, I realised that I'd never be able to follow my own life again".

That's a woman who chose to have a baby—what about the woman who didn't? The guilt and depression of having to put your baby up for adoption could be greater than having an abortion. And if your child is black or disabled, mentally or physically, you are almost certainly sentencing it to 16 years in a children's home.

A British survey of 137 women who had just had babies found that 64% displayed such symptoms as anxiety, depression and distractibility (quoted in *Our Bodies, Our Selves*).

Dr. Colin Brewer, psychiatric advisor to the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, recently published a report on post-abortion psychosis—the incidence was only 0.3 per 1,000 legal abortions.

This is not to say it's better to have an abortion than a baby—but it's better to have an abortion if you don't want a baby. A woman's right to choose! □

Dear Spare Rib,

I enclose a copy of a chapter from a book which has just been published. It is called 'A Time To Die' by Katherine Milner, published by Wayland. It is intended for teenagers and is about death, and includes other headings such as suicide, accidental death, wars, a death in the family. The fact that the topic of abortion is included in this book is in itself an expression of a very biased point of view. As you can see, the chapter is also very biased—the woman seeking abortion is a teenage girl motivated by 'fear and self-pity', abortion leads to depression and doctors and nurses consider abortion as a kind of killing, which goes against their conscience. As far as I can see this chapter follows SPUC teaching very closely. I would like to urge everyone to write and complain to the publishers (Wayland Ltd, 49 Lansdowne Place, Hove, East Sussex BN31HS) and to make sure that it does not reach the shelves of their local public library or school library.

Yours in sisterhood,
Ann Fairbairn
Luton Women's Liberation Group

me feel easier about doing terminations...

it interception, extraction or aspiration. It's done with a uterine syringe and a canula, under local anaesthetic, and I'll give the woman a tranquilliser if she wants one.

"It makes me feel easier about doing terminations, because it's so safe and easy, as it's done in the first two weeks of pregnancy. I'm almost offering abortion on demand to local women. I've had folks ring up from St Helen's and Wigan; I tell them to see their own doctor. It should be

sorted out in each area.

"I'm not a radical, I'm considered a liberal on abortion, but I feel I should do something to answer the need in this area. If I do 100 ten-minute abortions I save 100 hospital beds and 100 operating spaces. The midwives are not very ready to co-operate. I think if I did more they might withdraw their co-operation altogether.

"There's very little inconvenience, as the whole process only takes about two hours; they

don't have to leave the family too long; they can just leave the kids with someone and come in, in the afternoon. But most of the women who have terminations are single. I've offered sterilisation to married couples where the women have had a contraceptive failure; 25% of the women and 10% of the men have accepted; it's a family decision.

"I don't want to advertise me; I want to advertise the technique. I want publicity because I think this technique should be brought to my colleagues' attention, getting it foremost in their minds, training them to train women to report early. I think it will take three to four years to get it through the grapevine that a doctor has to be seen in the first two weeks.

"I first saw it done abroad, can't tell you when—I think the chap was doing it illegally. This method is used a lot in developing countries and where there is a restricted abortion law. It's been around a long time—five years;

"In 1974 or '75 two London teaching hospitals published papers and started open clinics. Mr Hiamsu Basu has done about 350 of these abortions in an outer London clinic.

"I've been using this method since September 1975. The hospital hasn't said anything; a consultant is left alone to run his bit of a department the way he wants. They're not giving any assistance, but I haven't really asked. I may ask for money in two years or so to expand and then there might be problems." □



A group of lesbian feminists in London have set up Lesbian Line, a phone service for lesbians and bisexual women. They had a benefit on August 20 with Jam Today which raised enough money to have a phone installed, and this the Post Office have promised to do in the next few weeks. Lesbian Line will offer help, advice and information, initially one day a week. They hope that their help won't be restricted to telephone conversations, but that women will be able to meet and talk informally at other times.

There are other homosexual groups providing phone and drop-in services, — Gay Switchboard, Friend, Icebreakers — but these are all for both women and men. There have always been difficulties getting enough women to become volunteers with these mixed groups; for example Gay Switchboard have never had more than about ten women in a total of 60 volunteers, so lesbians ringing up have often not been able to speak to another woman. Mixed phone services tend to have many more men than women calling, so that women volunteers spend most of their time talking to homosexual men. Lesbian Line believe that women, both callers and volunteers, want to speak to other women. They also feel that the other groups are not primarily feminist, and are not organised along feminist principles.

Gay Switchboard say that although their men volunteers "are very conscious of women, and conscious of the needs of women", a women's phone service, somewhere to refer women where they know there will be women answering, is a very good idea. They agree they are "rather male-dominated." □

Ruth Wallsgrove

Lesbian Line can be contacted c/o Camden Women's Centre, Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd, London NW3. Their own phone number will be printed in Spare Rib as soon as the phone is connected



VIA WILMER



Injured woman being helped by St John's Ambulance men

FILIPINO BAN

The British government on August 5 banned the issue of any more work permits for resident domestic work to non-Europeans. The ban applies to residential work in institutions as well as private homes.

In this context Europe means the continent and not just the EEC — the ban is mainly aimed at Filipino and Colombian women who come here to do our dirty work on very low wages. Each year about 1,500 such permits are issued, 70% of them to Filipino women.

John Grant, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Employment, said that "against a background of unacceptably high unemployment, I hope these restrictions will increase employment opportunities at home." He also tried to justify this racist ban as being "for their own good", saying it would help prevent exploitation of overseas workers . . . □

INFORMATION TO
ANNY BRACKX
27 CLERKENWELL CLOSE
LONDON EC1

SHORTLIST PUBLICATIONS

The Other Side Of Adoption Jigsaw, founded in 1975, helped natural mothers and adoptees to make contact. The organisation folded for lack of money but published this 98 page cyclostyled booklet to continue its work. It records how natural mothers were forced by unnatural pressures to give their babies away, the anxieties of adoptees, and the problems they both face when they meet. The booklet attacks the double standards of morality, outlines the law on access to birth records and asks for better communication between those involved. Available at 60p + 20p postage from Jigsaw Publications, c/o 84 Oakfield Rd, London N44LB.

Carol Burns

*** Low Priority — Pre-school Childcare In Aberdeen**
A report by Ken Mullen and Bill Stokoe which could provide a useful guideline for people wishing to investigate facilities in their own area. It also comments on the political interests involved in policy making in the area of childcare. The facilities it describes are typical of Scottish cities — provision in Aberdeen, however, is well above the national average. Stronger conclusions and more positive proposals would have considerably improved the pamphlet. Available at 60p + postage from Aberdeen People's Press, 163 King St, Aberdeen.

Esther Breitenbach

*** As Things Are — Women, Work & Family In South London**
This is a pamphlet containing four articles from 75/75 editions of Knuckle, a Lambeth and Southwark community newspaper. Three of the articles are interviews with women working as night cleaners, launderette attendant and mail order clerks; the last is an interview with women who are fighting around housing and child care. The message is simply that women's lives as workers, outside and inside the home, are "totally tied up together". With large print, good lay-out

and clear and simple language, it is especially valuable material for literacy schemes. Available at 35p + postage from Dustbin Press, Union Place Community Resource Centre, 122 Vessall Rd, London SW9.

Irish Women At War
The papers of the Feminism & Ireland Workshop (London June 77), which cover the position of women in N Ireland and the 26 counties, give a historical account of women's participation in the Irish national struggle, sum up the role of the church, and more, are now available at 30p + postage from the Women & Ireland Group, 50 Upper TOLLINGTON PARK, London N4 (01-272 8446).

Country Women Newsletter
"Sorry about the delay and thanks to everyone who has sent subs. We now have enough money to put it together, so don't lose hope!" From Sue, Lynn and Jenny, The Old Post Office, Winterslow, Salisbury, Wilts.

Socialism, Anarchism and Feminism
This recent American pamphlet by Carol Ehrlich contains an interesting discussion of socialist feminism in the light of reformist tendencies within the women's movement, and a clear analysis of similar principles in radical feminism and social anarchism. However the most original and inspiring section deals with the Situationist concepts of 'spectacle' and 'commodity' which she sees as particularly applicable to women in their roles as consumer and consumed — and in our need to act rather than react by creating situations that will break the patterns of socialised acceptance of the world as it is. "Anything less than a direct attack upon all the conditions of our lives is not enough." Available at 50p + postage from Compendium Bookshop, 240 Camden High St, London NW1.

Lyn Alderson

Pregnant Fatherhood: Notes & Poems

A series of poems describing a man's relationship to pregnancy and fatherhood. Produced and published by the Men's Free Press, c/o East London Men's Centre, 9 Redman's Rd, London E1. 25p + postage and large brown envelope.

* Men's News

Number five, produced by Dalston Men Against Sexism Group, is also available from the Men's Free Press as above.

* indicates that these publications are also available from the Publications Distribution Co-op, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

CAMPAIGNS

Women's Aid

24 September. Demonstrate through Birmingham demanding a better deal for battered women in the area of housing, money and legal protection. The demonstration will be preceded by a national week of action; Women's Aid Groups will be organising public meetings, displays, discos to publicise the need for refuges in their locality. Details from the National Women's Aid Federation, 51 Chalcot Rd, London NW1 (01-586 0104).

AFFIRM

1 October. 3.00 meeting at A Woman's Place, 42 Earham St, London WC2 to discuss aims, philosophy and action the Alliance For Fair Images And Representation In The Media (AFFRIM) should take.

Abortion

5 October. Lobby Labour for abortion rights. 12.00 assemble at the Conference Centre, Kings Rd, (between piers) Brighton. "The Labour Abortion Rights Campaign (LARC) is a pro-abortion campaign in the Labour Party and calls on all concerned Party members and all pro-abortion groups to support this lobby and to work for an impressive turnout to ensure our voice is heard." There are coaches from London. Contact Astrid Lever, 57 Trinity Rd, London N2 for bookings.

29 October. National Abortion Campaign demonstration. Assemble 1.30 in Victoria Sq, Birmingham. No restrictive laws — Women's choice not doctor's choice — NHS abortion, every woman's right — out-patient abortion clinics now.

NAC Caravan & Exhibition. NAC is preparing a caravan with giant sized displays of photographs, personal testimonials, taperecordings, international news, cartoons, posters, to tour England throughout October, together with the *Abortion Rights Play* by Pirate Jenny II. All this is part

of the ongoing campaign against restrictive legislation — another anti-abortion bill is already on the cards. The caravan will cost £20 per day to run. You could sponsor it for part of a day or more. Watch out for the caravan in your area. For bookings and contributions contact NAC, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1 (01-485 4303).

Brighton Women Fight Rape Collective

"The only way to stop rape is for women to organise together to fight it . . . The group demand that rape be recognised within marriage and should constitute a criminal offence; that the definition of rape should include all physical coercion of women; and that rape victims must be treated more sympathetically by the police and the courts." The group is also setting up self-defence classes and hopes to get a rape crisis centre off the ground. Contact them c/o Brighton Women's Centre, Old Presbyterian Church, North Rd, Brighton.

ART

American Patchwork Quilts

24 September—9 October. Exhibition open 2.00—6.00 daily incl Sundays (Fridays until 8.00) at Peckover House (National Trust), North Brink, Wisbech, Cambs. "Although quilt patterns and materials went to America with English & European settlers in the 17th & 18th centuries, it is now recognised that American needlewomen in the 19th & 20th centuries have made a unique design contribution with their quilts." Organised by the Wisbech Society, Museum Square, Wisbech, Cambs PE13 1ES. Admission free.

A Litany For Women Artists
30 September. 8.00 performance at Camden Women's Centre as above, of "a sound-poem by Hannah O'Shea, for unaccompanied voice, in celebration of the life and work of women artists of the past". Entrance 50p (30p unemployed). All women welcome.

Birmingham Women Artists
"As the Birmingham Women's Artists Group we would like the next National Women's Liberation Conference (Birmingham April 78) to contain a strong feminist arts element in many forms; performance, photography, music, street and pub theatre. We would like these aspect to be an integral part of the conference." Send your suggestions and ideas to Phil Goodall, 35 Cambridge Rd, Kings Heath, Birmingham B13 9UE.



PROJECTS

Child Custody

5 October. 7.00 meeting at 2A St Paul's Rd, London N1. The Rights of Women Collective is planning a one-day workshop on child custody. They want help and contributions from feminists with experience in this area. Subjects: contemporary welfare reports, personal experience in custody cases, housing link-ups, historical perspective, lesbian custody, fathers fighting for custody, the legal profession, and theories of child development. Details from Elaine (01-633 0333 day) or Ann (01-607 6521 evenings).

Education As An Art

8 October. 2.30 meeting at Rudolf Steiner House, 35 Park Rd, London NW1, to discuss starting a free Rudolf Steiner school in London. Tea and playspace for children. Details from Anni or Glen Saunders (01-444 0864).

Postal Depressives Anonymous
"I'm very aware that people are often unable to get to meetings and that some depressives do

not even have a DA group in their area. Would anyone be interested in helping me start a 'Postal DA'?" Contact Sue Martin, 1 Millar Place, Morningside, Edinburgh EH1 05HJ.

Women In Yorkshire

Any women in the manual trades (building, mechanics, painting) who feel isolated, contact Jenny Tizzard, 12 Saltburn Terrace, Bradford 8. Also any women with ideas and suggestions for a meeting to discuss problems of women in trade unions, and strategies, contact Carole Moss, Flat 3, 1 Cunliffe Villas, Bradford BD8 7AN (0274-34844).

Apology

From Sally Cline and Margrit Shildrick, who had asked help with their research on bisexuality, and lesbian mothers. They've not been able to answer letters because of Sally's accident in a paraffin blaze. They are starting work again now, and hope people will contact them at 45 Canning St, Liverpool 8.

Correction

Spare Rib 61 (On the Road: London) listed the wrong telephone number for the Older Women's Collective. The correct number is 01-994 2357.

TALES & CONFERENCES

Recollections Of An 80 Year Old Feminist

22 September. 7.30 meeting at the Glasgow Women's Centre, 57 Miller St, to discuss a taped interview.

Supporting The Parents Of Handicapped Children

23 September. 7.30 talk at the Women's Research and Resources Centre, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (01-253 7568). Speaker: Caroline Glendinning (York Univ).

Radical Feminist Theory

29 September. 7.30 Meeting at the Glasgow Women's Centre as above, to discuss the papers of the Radical/Revolutionary Feminist Conference (Edinburgh July 77).

Women & The Crisis

29 September. A meeting at Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8, on the double oppression of women under capitalism, how it has come about, and how we can fight back. Organised by the Anarchist Workers Assoc/Libertarian Communist Group.

SW Regional Women's Liberation Conference

1 October. 10.00-6.00 at 12 North St, Crediton, Devon. Ideas for workshops, offers of papers welcome. Creche and accommodation available. Information from Carole Glucker, 9 Alexandra Terrace, Exeter, Devon (0392-33415).

Irish Women's Liberation Conference

1/2 October. See News.

Women In Fleet Street

7 October. 8.00 talk at the WRR as above. Speaker: Roger Smith (Essex Univ.).

Equal Opportunities

8 October. 11.00-5.00 day-school at the Nottingham Teachers Centre, Cranmer St, Nottingham. Primarily for NUT members, but NATFHE, NUS and others also welcome. Speakers and discussion on equal pay, maternity/paternity leave, nurseries, sexism in books and curriculum, organising and campaigning within the union. Creche and overnight accommodation available. Organised by the Notts Div NUT (YT Section). Register (£1) in advance with Tina Pamplin, 4 Melrose Avenue, Sherwood, Nottingham (0602-601588).

Women in Eastern Europe

8 October. 10.30-5.00 meeting in the TV Room, London School of Economics, Houghton St, London WC2, to discuss "bourgeois-feminist movements, the current debate in the press on the family and

the future of the Women In Eastern Europe Newsletter." Contact Wanda (01-263 2741) if you need a creche.

Legal & Financial Independence

9 October. One-day conference at the Camden Women's Centre, Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd, London NW3, to discuss the future and direction of the campaign; "we are thinking of launching a 'Don't get married girls' campaign this autumn to try and focus attention of the continuing enforced dependency of women..." Details from 214 Stapleton Hall Rd, London N4.

Feminism, Sexuality And Abortion

15 October. 10.00 Midlands Socialist Feminist Conference at Lanchester Poly, Coventry, to rethink strategies for control over our own bodies, away from "the limited and defensive struggles over abortion in the parliament and legal spheres." Contact Carolyn Pickering, 37 Gaveston Rd, Leamington Spa, Warcks (0926-32965) for registration and papers.

Sex Discrimination and Tax

15 October. 10.00-1.00 half-day seminar at Swedenborg House, 20/21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1. Organised by the National Council for Civil Liberties, 186 King's Cross Rd, London WC1. Fee £1.50

FUN & MUSIC

South London Women's Centre Bop

7 October. 8.00 at St Matthews Meeting Place, London SW2. Jam Today playing and disco. £1 (50p unemployed). Mixed.

London Women's Discos

Tues. 8.00-11.00 at the Sols Arms, Drummond St, NW1. Bar and vegetarian food. Entrance 50p.
Wed. 8.00-11.00 at the Prince Albert, Wharfedale Rd, N1. Bar. Entrance 25p.
Fri. 8.00-11.00 at the Hemingford Arms, Offord Rd, N1. Bar. Entrance 20p.
Sat. 7.30-11.00 Upstairs Room at the Royal Albert, Bolney St, SW8. Bar. Entrance 30p.
Sun. 7.30-10.30 Upstairs Room as above.

Voice Liberation

Every Thur. 8.00 at Action Space, 16 Chenies St, London WC1. Vocal workshop with Frankie Armstrong. Fee 30p to cover rent.

Clapperclaw

"We are a four-women folk band which got together to play at benefits, radical conferences. We use satire and humour..." Contact them at 15 Mat-cham Rd, London E11 (01-555 5248).



From Celine and Julie go boating

FILMS

The Women's Cinema

Is starting again in Mid-October and will hopefully operate from a club room at The Other Cinema. Programme details aren't confirmed yet, but check with A Woman's Place as above.

Women's Film Season

20 October - 5 November. At the Glasgow Film Theatre, 12 Rose St. (041-332 6535). Films about and by women including *Adoption* (mezaros/Hungary), *Salt Of The Earth* (Bieberman/US), *Three Women* (Altman/

US) and more, all followed by a discussion. Also a one-day event. Details from the Glasgow Women's Centre as above.

Save The Other Cinema

Set up in early 1970, The Other Cinema have promoted the work of independent film makers, both as distributors and exhibitors. They've shown political documents like *How Yukong Moved The Mountains*, *The Confessions Of Winifred Wagner*, *Riddles Of The Sphinx*... In order to survive they need to raise £25,000 by the end of the year. If you want to help the fundraising campaign contact The Other Cinema, 12/13 Little Newport St, London WC2 (01-734 8508).

FOREIGN NEWS

The group was actually started by a black social worker together with some household workers. There are now about 200 members, all women, with their own office and a government grant. From the beginning it was the household workers themselves who did the organising and produced the monthly newsletter. Most of the women involved came from South America and the West Indies with high hopes of improving their economic situation or to escape political repression (for instance in Chile and El Salvador). Others were French Canadian. Some came from Europe where they'd been effected by unemployment and the cuts. In Canada housework was all they could find.

We had general meetings once a month. From these, women were elected to the Steering Committee which met once a week to deal with more day-to-day organisation, and to various other committees — newsletter, publicity/recruitment, working on a work contract and against the proposed repressive Immigration Bill. All the meetings and newsletters had to be in French, Spanish and English. Things tended to be done slowly and with tolerance. Being a grassroots organisation had its difficulties — for instance, Sunday, our usual meeting day, was also our precious time-off, and often people wanted to talk about their own individual work problems rather than anything wider-ranging. But our strength was that we knew the specific problems and what demands would help.

The HWA's basic demands are to be included in the new Minimum Wage Law; for acceptance and legalisation of a contract to regulate hours, pay, over-time, work description, maternity leave, holidays etc, and for recognition of the HWA (though there was still debate about whether and how to become a union).

Behind these demands there are horror stories. One woman was paid ten dollars a week — when she'd finished the housework she'd be taken to her employer's factory to work there. One woman worked for an alcoholic and ended up using her own pay to feed the family. A woman from Jamaica complained to her boss about being asked to paint the house. She was told if she wasn't satisfied, there were "plenty more jack-asses waiting to come". It is quite usual to be paid 20 dollars below the 70 dollars recommended by the immigration authorities. I was employed for ten months as a "mother substitute" in a one parent family. Though my situation wasn't as extreme as



JO SPENCE, PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

In Montreal, Canada, the Household Workers Association was set up in 1976 so that women employed in private homes as cleaners, maids, nannies and kitchen staff could meet together and demand better conditions. An English woman who worked there for a year explains why the organisation started and how it works.

CANADA: Domestic Workers Meet

many, I worked at least 60 hours a week, was one of the family when work was to be done but back in the domestic servant role at other times. And if you complain, you're in the very vulnerable position of living in the same house as the employer. Even when I had "time off", I always felt I had to go out because if I was in my employer would go out and leave me with the kids.

Insecurity of a Work Permit . . .
A woman from Guyana was facing difficulties renewing her work permit and bringing her son over. Alone in an alien country and alone in the home, most household workers live under the insecurity of a work permit — when theirs expires, they are usually in the same economic position as when they arrived, for though wages are higher in Canada, they have probably had to pay their own fares there and have to send money home or bring

their families over. And so they can only scrape by in Canada.

Work permits can be renewed only a few times, then comes the battle to become a "landed immigrant" if one wants to stay. The authorities say you have to go back to your own country to apply for this. Even if you obtain this status, it's hard to change your type of work — one Jamaican has been in Canada for 25 years and is still doing domestic work though she'd really hoped for something better.

The HWA is fighting the proposed Immigration Bill, which will make it necessary for all immigrants and visitors to have an entry visa, and illegal for visitors to apply for work permits once in the country. "Landed immigrant" status will be dependent on settling in remote areas and taking work refused by Canadian citizens. Police powers will be greatly increased. By barely mentioning people on work permits, the

new Bill provides no protection or security, tacitly accepting that their numbers will increase and they will continue to do the lowest paid work and to pay income tax, medical and unemployment insurance, without benefiting from their contributions. They will be used both as cheap labour and as scape-goats for Canada's economic crisis (in Quebec Province there's nearly ten per cent unemployment).

Beginning to Discuss Housework

In all countries housework is still regarded as "women's work", not really work at all and not deserving the same pay as other jobs. Within the HWA it was beginning to be recognised that, though not directly productive itself, our housework and childcare is part of the productive process — it frees the men and women we work for to make more profits for industries and companies. If a legal association were recognised and a work contract enforced, household workers would begin to be seen as doing a proper job. There wasn't much discussion about the relationship between ourselves, paid to work in other people's houses, and women doing unpaid housework for themselves and their families. But if we win better pay and conditions it should raise the status of housework generally.

The next step would be to demand socialised housework and childcare facilities so that this wouldn't have to be the life work of one section of society.

Most members of HWA see the task of organising around housework in a short-term way, merely to improve working conditions. Others, who've been involved in socialist groups, see it as only part of political work, but the part in which they, as women and household workers, can be most useful. This is not a split in the group, but the beginning of trying to decide which direction to take.

When I left Canada this July, the HWA was beginning to cooperate with other groups — the Minimum Wage Group (an organisation for non-unionised workers, mainly women, like waitresses and homeworkers) and Office Workers. It was also making contact with women's centres, but I think the HWA would see contact with the feminist movement mainly in terms of reaching new members, women already employed as household workers. □

Do you know of any organisation in Britain like the Household Workers Association in Canada? If so, please contact SR News.

HOLLAND: Home Births Threatened

Holland, the country with the second best mother and baby survival rates in Europe, also has the highest level of home births — but the ability to have a baby at home seems to be under threat. Anna Briggs investigated on a recent stay in Amsterdam.

In a discussion with Professor Klustermann of the Wilhelmina Gasthuis, Amsterdam (the city's leading obstetrician and an avid supporter of home births), it was revealed that the proportion of home births was going down every year — whereas in 1950, 70% of births were at home, in 1973 it had been only 50% and in 1975 only 47%. So for the first time, more Dutch babies are born in hospital than at home.

Many factors are involved in this change, according to Klustermann. Younger gynaecologists in Holland are influenced by international developments, and as they practise entirely in hospitals and clinics (where women stay for 24 hours after delivery), they no longer see home births, and regard them as abnormal.

Housing in Holland is inadequate and though women have to pay 300 guilders (about £65) for a home or hospital delivery, if they have either bad housing or a "medical" reason for a hospital delivery, they can get free treatment through one of the various insurance schemes — a reason to opt for hospital. A woman who stays at home can get the subsidised assistance of a maternity nurse for the first ten days, but Klustermann thought this would soon be cut if numbers choosing to stay at home fell below 25%. And as

there is no "flying squad", a woman in trouble has to be moved to hospital in the middle of labour.

Klustermann is convinced that with good ante-natal care and screening the outcome of home deliveries can be fairly predicted. In one of his surveys, of the 50% of first-time mothers delivered at home, only 10% had any unforeseen complications — and of a large group of women having their second or subsequent child, only 2% had any trouble — because their previous "history" was well-screened. A study of 5,000 women is now being concluded, in which very few unforeseen developments occurred in the labours of a group selected to stay at home after a good first delivery.

No Problem?

Most young women I spoke to in Holland were quite clear in their minds that "hospital was safest" for having babies. They didn't see the pressure to go into hospital as a problem — and felt they could always change their doctor or midwife if they disagreed.

With other British women from self-help and Home Confinement Society groups, I talked to Dutch women in Amsterdam's women's house, both informally and in a meeting attended by mothers, pregnant women, midwives and doctors. Jetske Spanjer, who's been involved in translating *Our Bodies, Ourselves* into Dutch, and is now writing a book on breastfeeding, felt the

24-hour stay clinic deliveries were the "thin end of the wedge" and accepted that once obstetricians got most women into hospitals for births, intervention would become more common.

Other women thought that intervention wasn't common and that childbirth in hospital was "natural" — if they'd heard Klustermann's fears about the connections between many Dutch consultants and obstetricians in America, and about the attempt to undermine the status of midwives, I felt they wouldn't have been so sure. Though shocked to hear of the level of intervention in Britain and the USA, they didn't think this was a problem in Holland.

What we couldn't find out was exactly why 30% or more of women who originally said they wanted to stay at home changed their minds. "Complications during pregnancy" is an all-embracing term to explain this change — in Britain a "complication" can be found for every woman who wants to hold out against the "active management of labour" in hospital. We felt that Dutch women needed to be more on guard — before obstetricians take control of their bodies as they have ours. And at the same time, women in Britain and America need the help of Dutch sisters who can say "Look — 50% of us have our babies at home, and we survive!" □



RICHARD GREENHILL (FATHER OF THE BABY)

"Childbirth is safe at home, where women have more control of their labour..."



TAKING REFUGE

DUBLIN: On August 30, seven women and 18 children from the refuge in Harcourt Street occupied the "Overseas Club" in Harcourt Terrace.

There were 117 people in the refuge that night. The Legion of Mary who own the premises are at present trying to sell them. They had closed their 30-flat hostel, perhaps because they were not getting enough converts to Catholicism. If they do sell the building, the money they receive must go to a charity. The Legion of Mary have not contacted Women's Aid. When Women's Aid contacted them, they said they could stay in the building for a few days, but Women's Aid told them they were not leaving.

So far media treatment has been good and it's been in all the national dailies, on radio and television. The police didn't interfere with the occupation, and local people are supporting Women's Aid.

This is one of the most radical actions to have taken place in Ireland recently, and all the more astounding as Women's Aid in Ireland (unlike Britain) has very few links with the women's movement.

A member of Irishwomen United
Donations, telegrams and letters of support to: Women's Aid, Box 791, Dublin 1, Ireland.



RAPE ACTION

Women Against Rape invaded the *Guardian's* offices on July 26 in protest at an article by Harold Jackson called 'The Rapist's Reply'.

The article, a "humorous" attack on the current feminist debate on rape, missed the essential point — that rape is an act of violence against women rather than over-passionate

NEWS COPYDATES
SR 64: September 23
SR 65: October 21

WARNING

Anyone intending to take action about the incest case reported — inaccurately — in SR 62, p 29, please first contact Sarah Nelson or Audrey Middleton on Belfast 667100 or 662082.



The Queen's University of Belfast



students' representative council of the students' union
Students' Union, University Road, Belfast BT7 1PE, Northern Ireland.
Phone Belfast 24803/42124.
Telex 74152

2/8/'77

VB/CF

Dear Pat,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Executive of the Students' Union Q.U.B. concerning your mailing outlining details of your proposed conference; we would like to inform you that you have not received official approval as yet from Executive to hold such a conference here.

In order to reach a decision as to whether or not this conference can be hosted in the Students' Union we require the following information:

1. What women's groups have been invited?
2. Has the Women's Rights Movement to whom we are affiliated, been invited?
3. Will both male and female representatives be eligible to participate in this conference?
4. What is the official title of the organization which is dealing with the arrangements of this conference and to whom are you affiliated?

It is in your own interests to reply to this letter without delay.
Yours sincerely,

pp U. Hanson
The Executive
Q.U.B.S.U.



The Queen's University of Belfast



students' representative council of the students' union
Students' Union, University Road, Belfast BT7 1PE, Northern Ireland.
Telex 74152
Phone Belfast 24803/42124.

11/8/'77

HPB/CF

Dear Ms. Allen,

I regret to inform you that the Executive of the Students' Union have rejected your request for permission to use Union facilities for the proposed Women's Conference.

The reasons give are:-

- (1) The sexist bias of the Conference totally opposes Union policy. (Executive feels that the struggle for Women's Rights to the total exclusion of men's rights presents a conflict in ideology which is counter-productive in the long run).
- (2) The fact that the Conference is not to be a wholly representative one embracing all Women's groups and all those interested in Women's Rights and related issues.
- (3) The fact that the Women's Rights Movement to whom we are affiliated will not be participating.

Yours sincerely,

HUGH P. BEVAN

(PERMANENT SECRETARY)

did not have a name as an organisation but that the Students' Union could refer to them as the planning committee for a women's conference and that, as is common practice elsewhere, men would not be admitted to the conference — but that other students' unions had been used for women-only conferences.

They then received another letter (*shown right*).

The planning group are determined to fight this decision, and are even more determined to go ahead with the conference. They have been offered space in the Extra-Mural Department, just across the road from the Union.

Sue Slipman, president of the National Union of Students, to which the Union of Students in Ireland is affiliated, is "very surprised" at the decision of Queen's Students' Union executive. As a union, the NUS does not hold women-only conferences, and its rules state that where union finances are involved groups must be open to all students — but union facilities can be used by

organisations that are closed to some students and, as the Irish planning group said, students' union buildings have been used by Women's Liberation Conferences in Britain in the past.

Sue Slipman says she wants to encourage the use of union facilities by the Women's Liberation Movement. "There is nothing in NUS policy that is against supporting an autonomous women's movement." She has undertaken to write to Queen's to find out if they have misunderstood NUS policy in some way.

Of course NUS policy on student women's groups remains. A university or college women's group cannot get money from their union unless they hold some mixed meetings, no matter how counter-productive or even destructive such meetings are. □

Ruth Wallagrove

All-Ireland Women's Liberation Conference, October 1-2, at the Extra-Mural Department of Queen's University Belfast. Proposed workshops on Women in Eire; Sexuality; Health; Structure; Violence against women; "Feminism, Socialism and Republicanism". And fun! — book-stalls, posters, films, videos, Saturday night bop.

Registration £3; £1.50 for non-earners. Accommodation on people's floors or if necessary in cheap B&Bs. Creche provided. Please bring your own eating utensils and sleeping bag. Registration to Pat Allen, Dept of Genetics, Queen's University, David Keir Building, Stranmillis Road, Belfast. Advance papers to Audrey Middleton, 13 Sandymount Street, Belfast. Contact numbers Belfast 662082; Portstewart 3964.

Feminists vs. Students Union

Feminists throughout Ireland planned their first big conference — but the Students Union of Queen's University, Belfast refused to accommodate it: for women to organise together to fight their oppression is — apparently — sexist.

Since June feminists from various groups throughout the North have been meeting in Belfast to plan a National Conference for all women interested. This all-Ireland Women's Liberation Conference, to be held in Belfast on October 1-2, aims to provide "an opportunity to start a loose association of groups which would support each other's campaigns, demos, press-watching, etc..." and to discuss the theory and strategy of Women's Liberation and the future of the Movement in Ireland.

But the conference will not be at the Queen's University as originally planned.

At first the Students' Union agreed informally to have the conference in union buildings. The planning group sent a formal request to the union's Education & Welfare Secretary, Ursula Hanson, clearly stating that they were inviting all interested women's groups in Northern Ireland and Eire. Ursula Hanson's reply (*shown left*) asking for more information showed no understanding of the Women's Liberation Movement, its autonomy or its looseness of structure.

In reply to this letter, the planning group said they were inviting all interested women without exclusion, that they

were being locked out, they rushed the doors, and after some scuffling between them and security men were all allowed upstairs. The deputy editor agreed to give them equal space to reply, and their article duly appeared the next week.

WAR said: "The *Guardian* pretends to be a liberal paper" but printing "The Rapist's Reply" shows "they still find

rape a rather humorous subject. We made it clear we don't find it funny."

Suzanne Lowry of the *Guardian* women's page said she was "glad that women can make their presence felt in this way", though she personally didn't agree with the leaflets. She felt the protest made some impact on people working on the paper. "I thought it was funny but it shook the men." □

sex. Angered by its flippant tone, WAR went to the *Guardian* to demand the right of reply. They arrived when the deputy editor was "in an important conference" (the editor being away) and were told to return at 12.30 to talk to him. They waited outside, burning copies of the article and handing out leaflets saying, "The *Guardian* condones rape."

At 12.30, thinking they

How to Advance Your Husband's Career

Managing Women

"The first unit covers issues like: clothing recommendations for business-related functions . . . and guidelines to gracious entertainment . . . The student learns that a happy tranquil home is a haven from the work day 'battle ground'." The course in question 'How To Advance Your Husband's Career' comes in a package complete with course notes and two videotapes lasting two hours, presented by Mildred Johnson, management consultant.

If scrubbing your husband's back is not your scene, do not despair, because Advanced Systems International, the American company which devises the courses, has something in store for any able and willing person . . . so long as you bear some "basic insights of sound management philosophy" in mind. The student has to learn "that material abundance is not the only, and perhaps not the best basis

for justifying the profit system; . . . free enterprise can also mean social, political, and spiritual freedoms."

So if you want to be a career-woman, there is a place for you. But you cannot expect everybody to accept this right away, especially men. To make it easier all round there is Course 1090 'Women: The Emerging Resource — How To Manage Women', in which the participants are encouraged "to

isolate their own attitudes about 'Women's Lib' and its effects on business". A Dr. Herzberg then psychologises away on tape about the cultural reasons for men's opposition, and the course continues with a discussion on why management should be concerned with the issues raised by Women's Rights: it's the law, there's the social pressure, and there are of course potential gains to business (meaning women are more malleable, less organised and satisfied with less power).

It may take some counselling though for women to become "better motivated and more career-minded". But once in the field of management, most women "speak of their feeling of 'belonging' — the feeling that what they are doing is making a difference in the society that they are shaping."

These course outlines were sent to the Training Officer for a large engineering company in England who sent them on to us. They clearly demonstrate the capitalist approach to women: if they won't be docile 'home-makers', then incorporate their demands for equality and financial independence by screwing the most out of them at work outside. □

Anny Brackx

Blundered judgement

A tribunal decision that a woman sales officer at Clay Cross Quarry Services should be paid the same as a man doing the same job was reversed at appeal by Judge Kilner-Brown.

He ruled that the firm was entitled to pay the man £8 a week extra because he'd been earning more in a previous job and wouldn't work for less.

Pat Turner of the General and Municipal Workers Union, Judith Hunt of TASS and Jean Coussins, women's officer of the National Council for Civil Liberties, issued a joint protest: "If let to stand, this blundered and irresponsible judgement could prove the biggest blow against equal pay for women" since the introduction of the Act.

Pat Turner added: "It has been a recognised ploy of employers over the past six years to try and segregate men from women at work, in order to prevent equal pay comparisons. Employers will now be thanking the Appeal Tribunal for providing them with the means to integrate jobs — and still pay men more. The only excuse they need is that men were previously on higher earnings, which is almost always the case."

Course # 1090

Women: The Emerging Resource

Watchdogs and wages

After a strike lasting seven weeks, 140 women and 20 men working at the American owned Essex International Company, Milwinning, Ayrshire, decided to take over the factory and stage a 'sit in' and 'lock out'.

"We feel disappointed and angry that it's come to this," said a spokeswoman. "But after seven weeks of being ignored we hoped it just might force the management to negotiate".

The strike began as a protest over the use of time sheets, stopwatches, and repeated requests by the management to step up production.

"These things are used in factories that operate bonus schemes. We have been offered nothing — yet they expect us to fill in time sheets, work



SANDI RITCHIE-URQUHART

under a stop watch, ask permission to leave our section for any reason. It's like being

Two of the women in the Essex International occupation in school again. If they expect us to do that sort of thing they should pay us more."

The women's wages average £25 after all deductions, around £10 less than other companies pay women workers on the same estate, and £7 less than Essex International pay their fellow workers in Northern Ireland.

The women who are in their twenties and under come mostly from the council houses in Kilwinning. 25% are the only main wage earner. Most of the women have children who are dependent financially on them. The women collect £9 a week strike money payed by their union, AUEW, and all feel the decrease.

To date the situation remains in deadlock, the management will not negotiate unless the strikers go back to work, and the women will not go back until they have an assurance that the watchdog technique will not be used.

"Meanwhile everybody waits, it's a right war on nerves." □

Sandi Ritchie-Urquhart

New benefit for disabled women

Women who are married and disabled are now entitled to a £10.50 a week tax-free, non-means-tested pension from the DHSS, if they are "incapable of their normal household duties and also of paid work."

An estimated 40,000 women will qualify for this new benefit, which comes in on November 17. Another 5,000 women receiving national insurance benefits will get only a percentage of this amount.

Organisations fighting for the rights of the disabled have campaigned for this pension for years. At least now a disabled woman who is married can have her own allowance — pity she's getting wages for non-housework and not as her right to be independent. □

STOP PRESS: The occupation is over. From October 5 the company will raise their wages above those of their counterparts in Derry, and the workers will accept work timing, work sheets and other management proposals.

"We're getting up again now"

After the Appeal Court dumped ACAS — the government's conciliation service — after the APEX leadership dumped the mass picket, August seemed like the beginning of the end for the Grunwick strikers (see SR 61).

But with the TUC congress looming, demands for official union bans on light, heat and post office services to the North London company came up at a special delegate conference on Grunwick held in London on August 23, organised by the South East Regional Council of the TUC.

The conference was advertised as a call-out to action, a coming together of energy to concoct the strategy which would defeat Grunwick boss Ward, the National Association For Freedom and the capitalist system itself. It wasn't that at all. A resolution for the TUC had been prepared beforehand. What was wanted? A show of hands and a lot of noise in favour.

Certainly the applause was steady, overwhelming in the right places, like for the Cricklewood postmen who had blacked Grunwick's mail for weeks. But only two women spoke at all, and no one brought out that it's a women's struggle or mentioned feminist participation in the picketing.

Were the feminists who've been involved not aware that the conference was happening? Were they unable to get "credentials" which would let them in? Either possibility shows up problems to sort out.

We asked Jayaben Desai, Strike Committee Treasurer, what she thought about the way the APEX national leadership called off the mass picketing early in August.

"Most of the ladies disagreed with calling it off. It was called off by force, by threats and confusion." APEX was complaining of losing members, threatening to cut strike pay and throwing the rule book at the strikers; causing divisions among them.

Why were the women so resolute? "Because they were suffering a lot, having to stand outside all the time. The boys were more careless, and they got confused. But now



JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

Lobbying the TUC: a motion to continue and intensify financial and practical aid to the strikers was passed unanimously. Grantham, head of APEX, said that as mass picketing hadn't stopped the company they must use "brains instead of heart" and needed "sophisticated and detailed planning".

In the visitors' gallery, Strike Committee Secretary Mahmood Ahmed said the motives behind the motion were stronger than the motion itself — "We repeat that the only way to stop this company is to cut off all supplies and services."

they are strong again."

It was the leadership too who insisted on converting the July 11 day of action into an inoffensive demonstration. "It was my biggest heart-breaking day of the whole dispute," Ms Desai said, "because these people came with their hearts to help us and we were saying with our own voice — under force from the APEX leadership — don't help. It was terrible."

Now that Scarman's inquiry has recommended that Ward reinstate the strikers and recognise the union, and Ward has resolved to ignore it, there's a stronger initiative to cut off services to the firm and restore mass picketing.

August is over now. "Sometimes we get a bit desperate. But we always get up again," said Ms Desai, "it's like sitting down for a rest — we're getting up again now." □

Bea Campbell and Nell Myers

Just two women spoke at the TUC on September 7, not counting Marie Patterson in the chair. One, Kate Losinska of the CPSA, the civil servants union, argued for better nursery provision, saying it was "ironic that when the government was claiming improvements in the position of women in society, it was also implementing measures to ensure that such progress was stillborn".

Congress called on the government to give priority to expanding nursery education facilities, and instructed the General Council to assist affiliated unions to set up workplace nurseries.

The day before they'd agreed on the need to amend the Equal Pay Act so it would mean equal pay for work of equal value — because in the clothing industry for instance, women don't do similar work to men.

Thanks to Adrienne Margolis for information.

Men sell better

Image-conscious CBS Records has been accused of sex discrimination in the way it selects people for jobs.

Kathleen Doherty had worked for two years as a credit control assistant at CBS's North Kensington depot until March when she saw a vacancy advertised for a sales office assistant at their head office in Central London. She, another woman and one man applied for the job from inside the company; eight women and six men applied from outside.

Phyllis Morgan, personnel officer, selected five men and one woman for interview from the external applicants, along with all three internal applicants, and arranged that she and sales manager Michael Robertson would interview the outsiders on March 30. When one didn't turn up, they called in the male internal applicant who was "well-known" to the personnel managers and worked just along the corridor at head office.

Kathleen was interviewed the next morning, by Phyllis Morgan alone. She says Phyllis Morgan rang her that afternoon to announce that Michael Robertson had found a man at head office and wasn't interested: "Don't be too disappointed. I know it's sex discrimination and all that but we feel men can sell better than women." Kathleen says she was told to "brush up on her typing" and they'd try to find her an office job at head office.

At the tribunal on August 15, Phyllis Morgan gave a slightly different story: "I could tell Doherty was upset so in order to put her mind at rest I said 'Sex discrimination and all that'. I didn't say it was sex discrimination."

"Well," broke in the trade union representative, "you've got me beat."

CBS will put their side on November 7 at Ebury Bridge Road tribunal, London SW1. The problem with such cases is that the onus of proof is on the woman who feels discriminated against — rather than on the company to prove its innocence. And discrimination is notoriously subtle and difficult to prove. □

Jill Nicholls

Thanks to Brian Baker for information.

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events

●Violence against women: Workers League public meeting with speakers and discussion. "The Roebuck", Tottenham Court Road, 29th September, 8pm.

courses

●THE CHANGING PLACE OF WOMEN, 1800 TO THE PRESENT DAY. A two term course, meeting on Wednesdays 7.15-9.15pm at Goldsmith's College, S.A.S.S., New Cross, London SE14 6NW, starting 21st September. Further details College tel. 01-692 0211 or Frances Widdowson 01-852 0947

●Mill-girls and maids-of-all-work. Women's history course, based on biographies and oral evidence. Moston College, North Manchester. Thursdays 7pm from 29th September. Phone Gaby Porter/Jill Liddington 061-798 0871

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There will be 8 courses running in the Cardiff area this autumn: in Cardiff, Cowbridge, Newport, Merthyr and Pontypridd. Some of the courses will be in the evening some in the daytime, and one in Welsh. Hoping to have creches.

For further information contact: Jill Boden, Dept of Extramural Studies, 38 Park Place, Cardiff CF13BB

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messages

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groups

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●C.R. group starting North Kensington. Phone 01-960 5967 or 01-385 7828.

●HARROGATE FEMALE LESBIAN GROUP. Interested? Please contact BM/SORELLA LONDON WC1V 6XX

●INVERNESS women interested in starting a group contact Deirdre 38904 evenings.

●ABERDEEN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT meeting 17th October, 163 King Street. Newsletter £1 subscription. Contact Annie Francis, 33 Jasmine Terrace.

●EAST HERTS. Anyone interested in starting lesbian feminist group write Box 633.

●CORNISHWOMEN interested in forming/joining group ring Claire, St. Ives 4234.

contacts

●Socialist feminist woman, thirties, living North London, seeks similar for friendship. Box 631

●ACCRINGTON isolated feminist desperate to meet others: Mike Jackson S/U Keele University, Staffs.

●In October I want to come to England for 6 months in order to learn English, but not necessarily as an au-pair-girl nor office-girl. Should like best to live together with some people, if possible work with them or anything else. Who knows about anything or has any suggestions, please write me: Astrid Hackenbeck, Kanfunger Str. 6, 6000 Frankfurt/Main, W. Germany.

●Lonely woman's woman seeks permanent partner (30-60) Anywhere. Genuine. BM/SORELLA LONDON WC1 6XX.

●ROMAN CATHOLIC feminists nationwide unite! 01-886 0779/ s.a.e. Box 635.

●Young lady for magical relationship with another. Simple country life. Box 637.

●Guy 32 sincere bi-sexual welcomes any feminist in NW9 area to share tennis, exploring, cycling, massage, conversation, swimming, wine, friendship. Box 630.

●Homosexual? Lesbian? Problems? Ring the women and men at FRIEND any evening on 01-359 7371/2.

●ENJOY LIFE? Want to meet other interesting people? Details with telephone no. (or SAE) to Box 630.

●NATIONWIDE female only contacts: very private and confidential Please send SAE for prompt reply to "Ariadne" The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT.



Looking back, the experience seemed to her like a collection of brightly polished beads, or because they were about death, like bones picked clean of flesh, eroded by sun and wind. She tried to fit them together to form a sequence, a skeleton of meaning, but they remained singular, isolated moments clearly cut away from the blank, dead time that surrounded them. Why she remembered these moments and not others, or indeed why events happened thus and not otherwise, she was at a loss to understand, but each remembered incident was carved in her mind, hard and clear, like an image in whitened bone. She sat, like a witch-doctor, throwing these bones, over and over, to find their meaning.

The blanket they had covered him with was green. It was the sort of lurid green that is used to dye cheap blankets. She knew this because she and Stephen had owned two such blankets, bought during the first years of their marriage. In fact, at the time she had thought the men had taken one off the beds to cover him, but it turned out subsequently that those two were still in place. She shut her eyes and saw them pass with the stretcher. They had not looked at her as they moved him down the stairs and out of the front door. She stood silently in the open doorway not knowing how to say goodbye to what they carried. She could recall this scene at any time; two faceless men with the lumpy stretcher under the green blanket.

She had waited in the street because she could not bear the silence which surrounded him. "Why have you taken so long?" she cried to the doctor and ran up the stairs. But Stephen was already blue. "Mrs Craig, he has gone. Your husband is dead." She lifted her hands.

She stood at the window while the doctor telephoned. The window was large, divided into squares by strips of white wood and the deep sill was also white. She looked out on a street which was already autumnal, showing the first flurry of dry leaves, although the dying year was as yet just a hint in the warm wind. "He had so much to do!" she repeated. His death was unbelievable. The world had turned into a nightmare where the impossible happened. The doctor said, "Mrs Craig, you are very calm," and gave her some yellow pills.

There was suddenly nothing for her to do. Early the next morning, long before the ragged army of black workers who serviced the white town, the cleaners, milkmen, gardeners, postmen and delivery boys passed her window, her son, Jeremy, came to her bed. They lay silent, cold, their bodies not touching, waiting until it would be time to get up. They lay in the big, empty double bed waiting for an excuse to start the day.

The wife of the Professor of Music lent her six black hats, but she put on a black veil which was also borrowed. On the way down to the car, turning the bend in the stairs, Jean saw her neighbour staring up at her in horror. She and her husband had been away for the weekend and had just returned. "Jean!" she cried. Jean walked as if in slow motion down the stairs, her hand on the balustrade, dressed in black for her husband's funeral. She felt as if she were watching a film and playing a part in it, both acting and watching, observed and observing. The pills had helped, she supposed, but it was more than that, it was a disbelief in the reality of what was happening. The disbelief was so total that when the Vice-Chancellor stumbled charmingly across the lawn to offer condolences, she could stand up and be charming to him too. It was more than disbelief though, it was that this death had called into question her whole relationship with the world she lived in. Where did she fit in now? Who were these people? They were his friends, his students, his colleagues. They had honoured him. She watched the endless procession of cars driving behind them to the cemetery, she noticed, but did not see, the people crowded around the grave. She had been Stephen's wife. What were these people to her? But a more important question was: what was she to them? If she cried, how long would they hold her? It was safer not to ask. It was safer to endure.

She watched them all climb into motor cars and drive away. Jeremy and she were left behind, standing on the sunlit pavement with the house at their backs, the front door open to receive them. They were part of the parameters of Stephen's life, no more than his books, his pipes, his furniture, his house, his car, his clothes. Together they made up a collection without an owner, although she was to become a self-appointed caretaker of all his goods. Where was Stephen? To them he was still in all those things, or rather he still claimed those things and they were answerable to him — for his house, his car, his books, his garden. She had not known then how much other people would want to own his possessions, perhaps sharing her respect for the meaning he had attached to them. She had not known then how bitter she would become in defending them. She and Jeremy accepted his valuation of those objects, loved them because he had collected them, feared losing them because they feared his displeasure. They wanted everything to stay the same, even their own lives still belonged to him.

Looking back on the experience now, with some irony, it seemed obvious that they had been busy defending a tomb. The vultures came and they beat them off, but the tomb

Bones

by Ann Oosthuizen



had no life in it. This was what gave each image its bitter poignancy, what made her grimace as she recalled each scene and the emotion that went with it. Yet she remained chained to these bones, these memories, searching for the right clue that would click them into place and free her from them.

She was accosted in the bank, at the side counter where you ring for statements. It was Mrs Lewis, a small woman with restless jerky movements, brown hair trimly waved. Pressing herself up close against Jean's body, her little beaver face quivering with eagerness, her brown eyes darting over Jean's face, she said, "Oh, Jean, I know it is rather quick" — it was in fact only four days since the funeral — "but we are really interested, we wondered if you would be selling your plot on the coast. Are you thinking of staying on here?" The earth rocked under her feet. Her hands went out to steady herself on the bland wood counter. "No," she managed to reply.

Oh, the sea, where they had spent so many days in the golden times, driving there even when Jeremy was quite small. They had slid down sand-dunes, gaily, on red and blue plastic toboggans, made fires on the beaches, sung songs in the lamplight, driven home sticky from the salt wind and the warm sun. They had bought the plot to build on, had paced it, fenced it, heard the sea beat in their dreams and the dunes stretch out in warm embrace.

"You will let us know if you ever think of selling, won't you?"

Jean stood firm, defending their land. With Stephen no longer there as protector, it seemed that everything he owned was up for grabs. Jeremy would sit on the floor next to the telephone, on guard, when the estate agents called. "We have a buyer, we were wondering if you would be needing such a big house now. We were wondering if you would like to sell." "No." "And of course, there is your plot at the sea." "No." Why did she have to put up with this now? The world thought they were fair game, but they would be cunning and strong. They kept the house and the land, jealously, not for themselves, but for him. They were holding on to what he had left, what they had left of him.

The front door bell rang. It was the old black man who came regularly for money. "The Master always gave me money, I have come to ask you for some." She stood with her back to this enormous double-storied house, crammed full of furniture and books and clothes and felt like the captain of a sinking ship. How could she save all this, how would they survive now without Stephen who had chosen, paid for and maintained all these possessions, including herself and Jeremy? All her fears found focus in this one black beggar, standing thin and frail at her door. "Have you no mercy?" She screamed at him, her rage turning him from victim into persecutor, herself into the poor widow. "If he had pity for you, have you no pity for his widow?" He started to edge away from this hysterical white woman. "Will you always take? Will you never give something?" She raved, beside herself with self-pity. He moved carefully behind the white gate. "I am going now, I am sorry."

Rudderless, she stood at Stephen's cupboard; his clothes still carried his smell. She held a black sweater in her hands and put it to her face. How can a man's smell live longer than the man himself? She wore it and carried the smell with her, but after it was washed the smell was yet another memory. His shoes, with garden soil still on them, stood empty. Jeremy wore his socks and later his shirts and jackets. They gave nothing away. A colleague wrote, could he have the academic gown, in memory, he would wear it in memory. A dealer in old clothes at the door was politely disbelieving when she said she had nothing to sell. The siege went on; a young black man had once borrowed *The Rise and Fall of the Dutch Republic*, could he have it? Her sister-in-law, visiting the bereaved family, asked to buy the big rococo cupboard and eyed Stephen's typewriter. "Jean, do you need them?" she was asked. She stifled her rising panic. No, she did not wish to sell, she was not leaving the house. No, the seaside plot was not for sale. There would be no change . . .

The envelope addressed to her lay on the mat, the name on the account had been changed from Mrs Stephen Craig to Mrs Jean Craig. She had liked the title, Mrs Stephen Craig. It had allowed her to share the power of his position, gave her the same social status that he occupied. She was still the same person. She still felt married to him. Mrs Stephen Craig had been acceptable and proper when he was alive, why not now that he was dead? Yet it did not matter how many times she corrected the accounts, they came back inexorably, Mrs J., Mrs Jean. However hard she fought, Stephen was being taken away from her. Or was it Stephen? Was it not that she feared losing this image of herself as Stephen's wife? If she lost that, what would be left? She had made him her shield and had hidden behind him for so long that she could no longer see herself as a separate person, but she had no choice, she was forced to step out of his shadow. Mrs Jean Craig was born, as we all are, without our permission, even unconscious of the meaning of our birth. Later she was to hear the title Ms, but it came too late for her, she had by that time rejected all titles, Ms, Miss, Mrs, were all one to her, confused between her father's name and her husband's, taken on marriage, she had become simply Jean. Jean Who? She did not know. Perhaps it was too late to find out. She threw the bones, looking again for images, trying to link experience to form patterns, meaning.

The car skidded on the untarred road. It was New Year's Day, the height of the summer drought and the road's surface, smoothed away by holiday cars, was treacherously pitted with small holes and jutting stones. She drove fast. It was hot and after weeks at the sea, she and Jeremy, their skins salty, their toes etched in black by the river sand, their hair thick and bleached with salt and sun, were returning home because of a message given to the seaside shop that their house had been broken into during the night.

They talked anxiously about what could have been taken. This had never happened before and they had no idea what the burglars wanted. Would they take clothes? Jean had not feared for her own, but for his, those unworn suits and jackets, empty shoes, his dressing gown behind the bedroom door, but it was not clothes the burglars had come for, they took what they could carry quickly away in their pockets, small things that could be given away or sold and among them were treasures, not in value, but for those two anxious people.

Broken glass and splintered wood from the kitchen window lay on the floor. There was candle-wax on the stairs. Drawers lay open, their contents hurriedly spilled out. What was gone? The police and insurance wanted lists, but it was only later, during moments of conversation, pausing in mid-sentence to check each beloved object, that she discovered what was missing; his watch, carefully kept for when Jeremy was older, his grandfather's gold pocket watch, long since broken, which he had valued. How could other people need them as they did? She bit her lip, controlling her anguish. She could not guard it all, accountable to Stephen's memory for each new loss.

From then on the house became a target for the small, homeless boys who scavenged the streets and lived in the storm drains beyond the large gardens. Stephen had built Jeremy a tree-house in an old pepper tree in the far corner of the lawn. It was small and dark, and Jeremy had not made much use of it. The neighbours complained that vagrant black children were using it for shelter at night. It was useless to send the children home, young as they were, they were largely on their own, the poverty of their homes could not feed them and the houses in the black part of the town were even more overcrowded than the nine foot square box in the pepper tree. She took the roof off the tree-house to discourage the children from camping on her land. It was preferable to calling the police.

But the children had become familiar with the house and knew the way in. The house had always stood open, yet now, if the kitchen door was unlocked, the food in the refrigerator, cheese or meat, would disappear in a flash.

Even when she was at home the big french doors onto the garden, the kitchen door, the front door all had to be locked. They were living in a fortress. Slowly an aversion to the house grew in her. They guarded too much. They had too much.

How had this happened? Jean looked back on those days remembering how she had slammed shut the door of the empty fridge muttering angrily and impotently, "Property is theft!" She was being forced to consider her relationship to all the contents of the house. She did not yet feel trapped, served unquestioningly the master whose unspoken commands she had framed for herself, yet she rebelled at the thought that she must be forever answerable to a dead man for the things he had owned, cleaning his silver, locking his doors. What had she to do with all this fine furniture, the lovely garden, the roses nodding on the marble table, the polished wood gleaming silkily in the candlelight? Stephen Craig was dead. Yet although she and Jeremy clung out of fear to an identity which had given them the only security they knew, he could no longer help her work out her confusions, she could no longer follow his lead, expect him to make the moral decisions which would carry them through the next stage in their lives. In the past, Stephen's presence in their lives had meant that at any time they knew who they were by their relationship to him and Stephen had always seemed to know who he was. He had also made it clear who he expected them to be and Jean admired him and feared his disapproval even then, after his death.

She searched for another moment in time which had made her, Jean, move away, out of the security of her husband's shadow into the wind and space of a whole person. Even now she could not talk of an identity, perhaps she would never find that, but she was beginning to know what she was not. And she was no longer Mrs Stephen Craig. How had this happened?

They stood inside a small wooden house, one room, ten foot square, while outside the dry cold wind blew up stinging gusts of sand and rocked the walls. They had driven two hundred miles to gather information on a resettlement camp. That there were camps, solitary communities of displaced, exiled and homeless people living in houses put up neatly, but without hope on the open veld, was just beginning to be publicly acknowledged and, as Stephen's widow, she was a likely choice of companion to this small party of whites who wished to see for themselves what such a place was like. They had eaten a large lunch with the Roman Catholic priest who was now showing them round his parish. In the house lived a young woman whose husband was contracted to work for a construction business 800 miles away.

A small wood fire burned in the centre of the room. There was no chimney and the fire gave off little heat, although smoke was everywhere. Two children, both under five years, sat huddled round it, while a third lay asleep on the only bed. He did not wake when the party of five adults entered the house. There was no floor, but the dry earth swept clean and the only furniture was the bed and four wooden boxes covered in clean newspaper on which stood two empty cooking pots. The house was painfully tidy, but gave off the same air of exhaustion that was apparent in the little boy asleep on the bed.

The priest asked the woman where her husband was. For the benefit of the visitors he interpreted her reply. She looked sadly at them; he was in Cape Town, she saw him for three weeks each year. He had not seen the baby she had conceived on his last visit and which she now carried on her back. Standing there, unable to make the least difference to a situation that she found intolerable, Jean wanted to say to this woman that she knew what it was like to manage a home without a husband, that she understood, that she had suffered too, but the words choked in her throat in that desolate room.

They walked to the car which was parked outside on the dusty road, the cold wind catching at their heavy coats, leaving behind them a woman alone. Jean knew she had failed, knew that there are moments in our lives when we must, like Job, tear our clothes and cover our bodies with ashes and that this had been such a moment. She walked back to the glass and chrome car and let them drive her home to the big house that she locked to keep safe all those things which had been entrusted to her care.

And saw herself a prisoner. In accepting Stephen's valuation of all the beautiful things he owned, in caring for them and protecting them, in insisting that her life now was in no way different from a life which had ended with Stephen's death, she had locked herself into the house and into his death. She had made it impossible for herself, Jean, to react immediately as one woman to the life of another. Who had appointed her caretaker to this collection of lovely objects owned by a dead man? It was herself, unable to take possession yet holding on to a style of life which was so far from what she was feeling.

The silence around his body was complete. She could summon it back at any time, hear it and feel the fear. She had to get back to that. It was a silence which did not reproach. It was beyond that. All their busy manning of the house had been a response to his life and what they had understood as his life. They had never understood his death. She moved gingerly into the void, dying in life.

And made her will. If she were to act she must leave things tidy. It was her first step into the unknown and also her first responsible action. She gave her lawyer her power of attorney and she applied for two passports, one for herself and one for Jeremy. She was separating herself from him so that her actions would be those of one person only. She did not want to involve him in her decisions, she had learned enough to know how easy it is to make another person your accomplice by dominating his spirit. From now on she and Jeremy were separate. They would make separate decisions, they had no common identity. That they loved each other was understood, they were gentle with each other, but they no longer worked as a team following the commands of an unseen general. She was spinning into space, her route uncharted, she would make no decisions for Jeremy, but she would make sure that he was safe.

The town was in crisis. Six thousand people were told they would be moved from their homes, not to alternative housing in the town, nor with adequate compensation for their loss, but to a barren site on the high bank of the Fish River, twenty miles away. It was not a new crisis, the threat of removal had hung over the people in the township for over ten years, but now the plans seemed imminent. She could not stand outside these events. She knew she must fight with the same determination with which she had defended her own home. Yet how could she act from the safety and comfort of this, the white side of the town? She could see the township every morning as she looked out of her bedroom window. Even from a distance it was mean and squalid, the tiny houses jumbled together on a bleak hillside. The different government departments said the eviction was slum clearance. The two black men in her sitting room looked at her in sullen rage, let them do it then, was all they would say, we have been threatened long enough, they might as well move us, we are already dead.

... continued next month

Why write this book? There are many reasons, there's never just one motive. If there was one motive, it was my previous work — *Love Between Women*. Because it was quite obvious from my study of what one calls homosexuality (and you will know from this book that I don't believe in all this categorizing) that if one can speak of a common denominator in human sexuality, then it is this stupid word — bisexuality.

As I am blessed and cursed with the need to always go to the bitter end, I said to myself after I'd finished *Love Between Women*, I'd give myself a good rest but then I must do something on bisexuality. And as you know, in between I wrote a novel — *An Older Love* — then I really got going. So my conscious motive was the knowledge that human sexuality can only be based on what is called bisexuality.

There is another answer related to why I did this work: why didn't anyone else do it first? It may be that I had another motive, unconscious I hope: it's also my ambition to be a pioneer! I think I am one. Up to now, no one had done this investigation, even Freud, as I say in the book, had only talked around it, he didn't really understand it. This takes a pioneer spirit — I want to do it because it *must* be done. And it's marvellous, I love to wave the flag when it's the right one.

The flag I'm waving about bisexuality is the assured knowledge that human beings, with the full complement of their being — the physical, the emotional, the mental, all deeply interconnected — that bisexuality is at the bottom of everything — and we've misunderstood sexuality by categorizing it into 'hetero' and 'homosexuality'.

If bisexuality is the basic dimension, why didn't you investigate bisexuality before lesbianism?

Probably personal reasons: first, I'm a doctor, a psychiatrist, and of course I am lesbian. And in my student days I fell into the most wonderful time — the days of the Weimar Republic in Germany, the open, so-called permissive society. Being a lesbian myself linked closely with my studies as a psychiatrist, the people who came to see me, and so naturally I turned to the study of lesbianism. I wasn't really conscious of bisexuality, I'd read about it, but it started to register the more I studied the lesbian situation, in particular married lesbians. I came across several lesbians who were very happily married. That's when bisexuality hit me, and why it has been the second part of my work.

You say from your study that the women bisexuals are more emotionally involved with their woman lovers than their male lovers, or husbands. So aren't they really lesbians?

Falling in Love Again

Charlotte Wolff interviewed 150 women and men for her study of bisexuality to be published by Quartet, October 13. Spare Rib talked with her about her book, her life and love.

No, what I have found to be the dividing line between lesbians and bisexual women (who are of course both lesbians and heterosexuals) is that lesbians do not fall in love with men, whereas bisexual women do. There's the difference, which may be hair-thin in some cases. Of course they are lesbians — we all are because we are all everything — but where it crosses the line is in terms of this emotion — *falling in love*: I can't say where it comes from — this urge, this fire, this magic, that happens when a person falls in love.

Don't you think that social — or economic — pressures can define who I fall in love with, a man or woman? For most women the pressures are to fall in love with a man, to have a husband — in the women's movement there have been pressures on women to be gay.

Yes I know about that, but I don't believe it. In my book on lesbianism I mention de Beauvoir saying lesbianism is a choice and I don't think she's right! Maybe it can be a conscious choice for a time, but something will hit back at you. An emotion, deeper than conscious choice.

For myself, it was a choice at the age of thirty to sleep with a woman for the first time, after years of heterosexual relationships. Then I asked myself — why hadn't I done it before, and I could see all sorts of reasons, some social, some emotional. Am I a lesbian? I decided — no, I'm not because, although most of my life and work is involved with women, there are still a few, a couple of men who I care about, whom I might wish to relate to sexually, and sometimes do.

Men you are in love with?

Who I had been previously — though that whole concept bothers me! And there were no particular pressures — not in

general, nor from my woman lover, to 'give up men'. But of course there could have been. I've talked with several lesbian mothers who while married, met a woman, 'fell in love', and were forced to choose their sexual identity. Often the husbands kicked them out, so they chose to identify themselves as lesbians because the pressures were so enormous. They were thrown out of heterosexual society. It would be very unlikely that they would fall in love with a man again.

Yes, I see what you mean, but I think that's too superficial. I'm talking of the fundamental choice which is not made by social or biographical pressures. Nor is it hormonal at all — though that may play a part. No, this is the eternal question and again I warn against falling into the trap of categorizing.

Yes, and some of the women I'm thinking of would say — not — "I've fallen in love with a woman, so I'm lesbian" — but — "I've fallen in love with this person who happens to be a woman". It's often a very romantic view: I've found my Ideal Lover. You are saying that we're all potentially capable of falling in love with any human being irrespective of gender.

Yes, why speak of falling in love with a sex, when it is a *person* and the sex is secondary.

What is this 'falling in love'?

We are not really speaking of this — this is a rare occasion — an exception — a gift of the gods. We are speaking more generally. But I will tell you, for it has happened to me twice in my life: it is the preoccupation day and night — one is driven — and every moment away from the person is an utter loss. You only feel right and full with the lover. I put it poetically because I can't help it, I'm a poet. But the people in my study — who come from the whole spectrum of society — they do mention it and understand it. When the person is not there you think — how can I stay in this town, the country is empty — that's how I see it.

What were the major differences between the men and women bisexuals you studied?

First, the men were far more dependent on women than the women were on men. And the men were more afraid than the women of showing the world their true identity — the men were much more insecure. Often in their marriage the men had a child-mother relationship to their women lovers, whereas the women were far more independent and courageous — not the protected but the protectors, to put it crudely. But speaking of sexuality, the men were far more homosexual than the women — even I

was surprised at the extent of the male homosexual practice. Some men said they had had at least three thousand homosexual experiences. Practically all the men had been through the sauna baths, the lavatories, anonymous sex in public places, in enormous numbers, with an urgency and desperation which is certainly partly society's doing.

Isn't that because the men are more repressed and guilty about their homosexuality than the women?

Absolutely. A mixture of guilt and the fear of being found out. In contrast we have the independence and freedom of the women.

You say in your book that bisexuals live in a twilight world without the security of either being heterosexual or having the solidarity of a minority group support for homosexuals. So they are envied and mistrusted from both sides. In the women's movement, bisexual women are mistrusted because it's assumed that bisexual women maintain all the privileges of a heterosexual relationship with the security and social acceptability that goes with it. That bisexuals are having their cake and eating it.

Yes, and that breeds resentment and envy. And there is something worse: in a relationship between two women where one is bisexual, there is the fear that the man would always win if a conflict arose — the old assumption of female inferiority. So women are still tainted by all the evils of patriarchy. That's terrifying, and it's one of the things that I would love to help to change. Women must remember who they are and think of all the powerful and famous women in the past — Nefertiti, Cleopatra ... who built and ruled great communities in the past.

Would you say, from your study, that there's less insecurity in a relationship between women who are both bisexuals than where one is bisexual and one a lesbian?

In theory, this should be a better balance, but it's impossible to say, there are so many other factors involved, it depends on the individuals. But you remember that one of the autobiographies I publish at the end of the book — and I think they are all fascinating — tells of Penelope: two women had been in love at college, then their work took them apart and they separated and married and never thought of their previous relationship. They both were in love with their husbands. Then — and this goes back to your question of choice — these two women met again, never thinking they would come together, and they talked and walked along the beach somewhere and there it was! The old fire — it burnt them and they still haven't lost it! And

they've both maintained both relationships. There was no question of conscious choice, it took them entirely by surprise. And those women made an important point: people think that love making between women is not so terrific. But on the contrary. Penelope said that because there is no model for lesbian sex, it is far more natural. That struck me as a most interesting insight: it is better because there are no stereotypes or conventions limiting what you do.

Why don't you call yourself a bisexual rather than a lesbian?

Simple — I have never fallen in love with a man. I have been very much in love with women — I write about that, my journey across Russia, in my autobiography — but I am not bisexual. I have had very close friendships with men, emotional friendships, but I never fell in love with any man.

Surely the point is whether you see yourself ever falling for a man in the future. A lesbian would say, I'm never going to fall in love with a man.

And Charlotte would say — you can't stop it, if the fire strikes!

Yes, but of course we look at the past patterns of our lives, the effects of early childhood experiences and these influence us. But you could say, even of a lesbian, there may come a man who is

so exceptional — so much like a woman, if you like — that it could happen. All the categorizing, when it comes to the point, is false. That is how I end my book: "We're all in the same boat, but in different attire." Even old Freud said — there's something wrong if someone is entirely heterosexual just as if they're entirely homosexual. Kate Millett says it in a different way in *Flying*: We're all bisexual but the homosexual represses the heterosexual side and vice versa. And of course fear, and pressures of society — all sorts of things are to blame. And of course the effects of a person's psychobiography, traumatic relationships, rejections and so on.

But many bisexual women in the movement feel guilty about that status — connect it with a liberal permissiveness, not committed to anything.

That's utter rubbish. Certainly the lesbians have a natural, straightforward identity and power in the movement, but the bisexual woman is just as strong, mentally and emotionally, as the lesbian.

I think a lot of bisexual women identify themselves as lesbians. Do you think that reinforces the stereotypes of being either straight or gay?

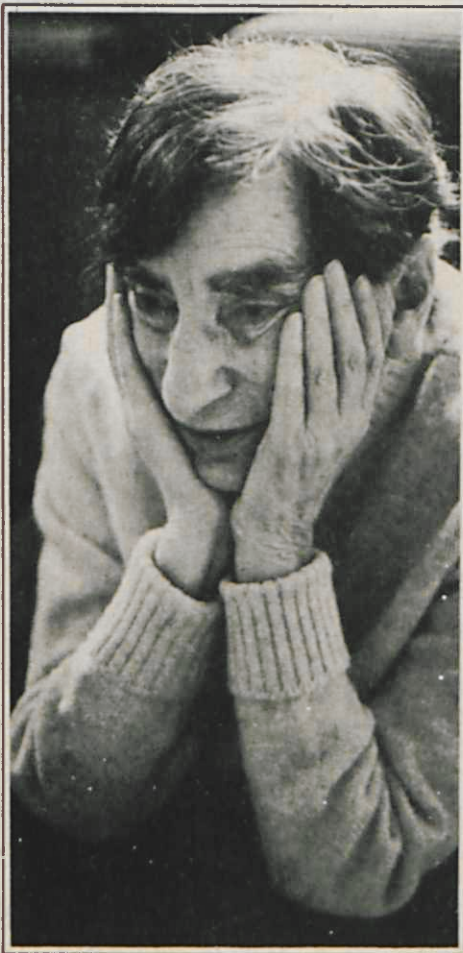
Yes, it's insecurity. There's a real need for women who are bisexual to speak out, to come out, as bisexuals. Because bisexuals, and lesbians, have so much the better lot — know themselves better, are in touch with their true selves, their true sexuality — than heterosexuals. I can't tell you how glad I am about my life, about being lesbian.

Yes, I suppose the kind of repression that's needed to keep people heterosexual is the same kind that ultimately destroys their sexuality. But I do worry about your commitment to 'falling in love'. I think many people, especially women, pay for a brief, high period of experiencing 'being in love' with twenty years of boredom and loneliness in marriage and monogamy.

Yes, that is tragic. What is important is to stay with a relationship while it is real and then to know when to go — to have the courage and strength to go when the time comes, when it is not working, when it hurts you and you feel ill at ease. We must attack the stupidity of false monogamy based on fear and insecurity. That's not love. As for the family, thank goodness the family is dying. We need a wider, extended family; children should have five mothers and ten fathers — and men can be 'mothers' and women 'fathers'. We must all fight against the limitations of the old ways. □

Next month we'll be publishing a discussion of the book We're Here — Conversations with Lesbian Women.

SALLY GREENHILL



Charlotte Wolff

reviews

BOOKS

BILLIE'S BLUES

by John Chilton

(Quartet Books £1.95)

It is hard to know what was more damaging to the reputation of the most poignant singer America has produced — the fact that Billie Holiday was ignored for so long after her death, or the fact that people flocked to see the movie allegedly based on her life, *Lady Sings the Blues*, and came out believing in a fiction.

The film, Diana Ross's more than adequate performance aside, was fiction from start to finish. It gave a distorted picture of an anonymous singer who had talent, love and everything she wanted, yet still stuck a needle in her arm. The average viewer would be right in thinking her a foolish

woman indeed.

John Chilton's book tells the truth. Long known for his encyclopaedic knowledge of jazz, he has catalogued Billie Holiday's career from 1933 until her death in 1959. He also attempts an explanation for the singer's tragic life in which racism, heroin, alcohol, violence and a lack of love all took their toll, and in doing so reveals an admirable understanding. But he doesn't go far enough; he fails to offer the kind of analysis of her experiences as a woman that will satisfy feminist readers.

Right from the beginning, Billie Holiday's talent was recognised by the musicians with whom she worked, most of them hardened pros who always regarded singers as a drag or a necessary evil. It is well known that when she worked with Count Basie's band, the musicians looked forward to her walking out on stage.



Jimmy "lover man" Davies and Billie Holiday, New York, 1944

Her dilemma was that recognition during her lifetime came mainly from musicians and a handful of *cognoscenti*. What Billie wanted, and understandably so, coming as she did from a background of poverty, hustling, prejudice and a lack of formal education, was to be recognised by the public as a STAR.

Chilton sees her realisation that she might never achieve the kind of "wider appreciation that seemed to come easily to others" as the main reason for her turning to heroin. There was also her inability to maintain a single really happy personal relationship. She was always attracted to the kind of man who sought to use her and treated her badly; the "good guys", it seems, just were not exciting enough for her.

As a singer, Billie Holiday was, like so many jazz artists, simply *too good*. Every musician and every incident quoted in *Billie's Blues* makes that clear. Clarinettist Artie Shaw with whose band she worked for a while, points out that her style was so copied that few realise just how original she actually was. This kind of talent — genius would not be too strong a word — combined with her background, the marketplace in which she was forced to sell her talent, and her unhappy love life, made addiction to *something* inevitable.

I think, too, that Chilton is

wise not to make too wide a distinction between dependency on heroin as opposed to alcohol. He makes the right clinical distinction, of course, but he also knows that heroin has for some time been in common usage amongst Blacks in the northern cities of the USA. It was especially common amongst musicians in the era when Billie Holiday became addicted. He stresses the destructiveness of the drug, but places Holiday's using it into perspective in her own kind of lifestyle. One minor quibble: at no point does he establish the criminal position of the addiction under US law.

Some feminists might see Billie Holiday's personal tragedy as gender-rooted, but again and again this book brings out the fact — not dramatically — that it stemmed more from her race than from her sex. Had Billie Holiday been born white she would have been treated like a Maria Callas, or whomever, such was the nature and extent of her talent.

As it was, she never received the recognition her artistry deserved. Even at the height of her fame she could still be forced to leave a club by the back door. This was the era when Duke Ellington, arguably the greatest composer of this century, was told: "If you were a white man, you would have been great." There is no more to be said other than to

Penelope Gilliatt SPLENDID LIVES

An hilarious account of catering for an American wedding; a splendid portrait of a 92-year-old radical English Bishop; a brilliant parody of a television "talk-in" — this new selection of short stories shows Penelope Gilliatt as skilful as ever.

£3.50

Secker & Warburg

advise anyone who has heard Billie Holiday's bitter-sweet voice to read this scholarly book, and to urge those to whom she is a stranger to go out and buy one of her albums.
Val Wilmer

authors mention the problems of conducting this type of research and also its inappropriateness for answering the kinds of questions they pose, but no sustained critique is attempted. The book is a psychology text and embodies psychologists' assumptions rather than feminist ones, but as a psychology book it comprises a useful review of current research.

Perhaps predictably, the later chapters 'Pregnancy

and Childbirth' and 'Women and their Mental Health' are the most interesting as these are areas in which *women's* views actually have been sought; this provides a refreshing change from the predominantly male views of the medical profession on how women will or should feel which are found, for example, in the popular childcare literature.

Lesley Goodman

WOMEN AT WORK

by Lindsay Mackie

and Polly Pattullo

(Tavistock, £2.20)

"What is so special about women's work? Does it differ from the work men do? How far can women be distinguished from men as a separate work force?"

The book opens with these questions and goes on to provide a useful description of women's work in Britain today. Women are concentrated in low paid, unskilled jobs — and the majority of the workforce in these jobs is women.

Women at Work is not an

analytical book. There is no attempt to explain, for example, how the pattern of women's employment is adapted to the interests of capital. Rather it is a sensible account of women's work with just the right balance of statistics and historical background to make it an informative and easy read.

I found the chapter on recent legislation to promote women's equality/rights and the discussion of women's struggles most interesting and yet unsatisfactory. Perhaps it is because I don't share the authors' optimism that equality for women workers will be gained solely through legislation and union participation.

Judy Wajcman

ON BEING A WOMAN

by Fay Fransella and

Kay Frost

(Tavistock, £2.60)

This book is described as a review of research on "how women see themselves", but anyone who buys it in the hope that this is an accurate description will be disappointed. In reality it is a review of the (mainly) psychological literature which seeks to investigate the various and differing attitudes among middle class and working class men and women towards topics such as sex-roles, working women, child rearing and marriage. The

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reviews

A WINDOW ON SOWETO

by Joyce Sikakane

(International Defence & Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 80p)

When women seek self-determination, more money or freedom from discrimination, our struggle has many parallels with the struggle of black people throughout the world. How then does a black woman relate to these two liberation movements? Very often her identification with the black liberation movements is stronger than her identification with her own sex because she feels that her exploitation as a black person is a larger and more

black women in South Africa. One example is her description of the birth of her second child: "Night deliveries at the clinic, which is not equipped for obstetric cases, were done without the knowledge of the white authorities who were safely off at home. All those in labour that night were collected by a jeep, and there we were, five women lying on ordinary stretchers covered by rubber sheets and newspapers. The room was cold. After she was born Nomzamo cried distressingly for a long time. At 5 a.m. we were led back into the jeep and dropped off at our homes, while the clinic was tidied up for the white staff arriving for duty. Two of the mothers taken home were still in an advanced state of

the one oppressor, Joyce is misleading us. Soweto is a city which has on average more than three rapes a night. Joyce is silent on the legal position of women in African society. She does not mention the "lobola" or bride-price which is paid by a husband to his wife's father, thus ensuring his power over her. If she leaves him, her father must refund the money. She does not examine the Natal Code of law which defines a Zulu woman as a perpetual minor, whatever her age, under the custody of her nearest male relative who has rights over her property, her children and her earnings.

In her book Joyce describes bread and butter issues, but because of the particular function of women in any community, these are also feminist issues. We learn from her how women in Soweto cope with poor housing, and inadequate health and education facilities. She demonstrates how women are harassed by low wages and their need to care for their families, how they borrow bits of food from neighbours to feed their children.

It is important for us to see the struggle of working people in a feminist perspective because unless we are conscious of our own area of oppression we will not cease to be exploited. Other liberation movements tell us that women's fight for self-determination should come later, after the more important issues are settled and that women will be freed by the creative process of the revolution. We know that this is not so.

Ann Oosthuizen

LIFE AS WE HAVE

KNOWN IT

by Co-operative Working

Women

edited by Margaret

Llewelyn Davies

(Virago, £1.25)

This quietly remarkable book is the story of our grandmothers' generation — a generation of working class women who entered as small children into household tasks, who then went out to work in field, factory or service at 10 or younger, who endured hard pregnancies and unaided confinements, who struggled to keep their families out of debt on inadequate wages and the mutual generosity of neigh-

bours. What makes it all the more special is that it's not just about these women, but by them too, for this is a reissue of a book of letters sent to the Women's Co-operative Guild, first published in 1931.

In their calm and unembellished prose the writers leave us a memorial of lives of struggle at work and home, too readily forgotten today. One woman keeps the secret of her motherhood for 22 silent years after her employer, "a gentleman of high position and good standing", raped her; another, with unselfconscious irony, speaks of reluctantly leaving her job because "my young man wanted to get married for he had no mother". A miner's wife shocks us into learning that no bathrooms in the miners' company cottages meant dreadful accidents as small children stumbled into scalding fireside tubs.

Reading it today, most of us can probably feel less bewildered by these harsh lives than did Virginia Woolf, who contributed an introduction to the book; but her admiration for the women and their accomplishments in the co-operative movement is something we can share. Virago is to be congratulated for reprinting this, and the promised reissue of its earlier companion volume on *Maternity* will be welcomed when it appears next year.

Jane Caplan

FROM WOMAN TO

WOMAN:

A Gynaecologist answers questions about you and your body

by Lucienne Lanson

(Penguin, 95p)

From woman to woman it isn't — it is quite definitely from doctor to woman. An attempt to pass on information certainly, but with the primary aim of improving relations with the medical profession rather than encouraging self-help. In fact the closest she gets to questioning the role of doctors is in the conclusion in which she says: "There are now over 150 self-help gynaecology clinics flourishing in this country (USA) . . . that these groups are being enthusiastically supported should give the medical profession reason to pause and reflect, for despite the fact that the vast majority of physicians are providing excellent care for their female patients, could it be that what

urgent issue than her exploitation as a woman.

Joyce Sikakane is 33. She is a black woman from South Africa who, after 17 months imprisonment without trial, most of the time in solitary confinement, and a subsequent banning order which forbade her to continue her career as a journalist, left South Africa in 1973 and now lives in the United Kingdom, married to a Scottish (white) doctor. She was born and lived most of her life in Soweto, the twin city to Johannesburg, where over one million black people live. Her book has recently been published.

In an interview for *Spare Rib*, Joyce told me that she had not set out to write an autobiography. Instead she wanted her own life story to be a vehicle for the story of the people who are left out of the history books and a depiction of working class struggle.

Yet what is most striking in this book is not the description of Soweto, but the personal details of Joyce Sikakane's life which reflect the position of black people and especially

labour."

Living in a society where the area of struggle is racially defined: black oppression, white domination, Joyce sees white women grow strong at the expense of black women. Traditional women's organisations which are open to all races tend to reinforce elitist aspirations of a few black women. Joyce writes: "What Soweto women need are organisations which will rally the women on bread and butter issues. Against the passes, making demands for more wages and better working conditions, demands for improved education for their children, demands for cheaper improved transport facilities, demands for the right to lead normal family lives."

At the interview Joyce explained why she felt that feminism was irrelevant to black women in South Africa. "The white exploiter is your enemy, not the man you are with . . . It is not Nelson Mandela who is persecuting Winnie, it is Vorster." Yet in representing Soweto as a united community with only

FLASHBACK

by Bobby Baker

the Art of Piping

Her 18 pictures made of icing sugar were inspired by a chapter in *The Modern Baker* (1912) entitled "Figure and Art Piping" . . . "It is the writer's intention to assist the student, if possible, in the art of making a veritable sugar picture."

Included in "Food Art", an exhibition at Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge, July 19-August 9.

(The icing sugar was kindly donated by Tate & Lyle Ltd.)



2. MIXING THE ROYAL ICING - following the simple rules laid down in the chapter



7. GROUPING THE DEER - and thereby obtaining perspective



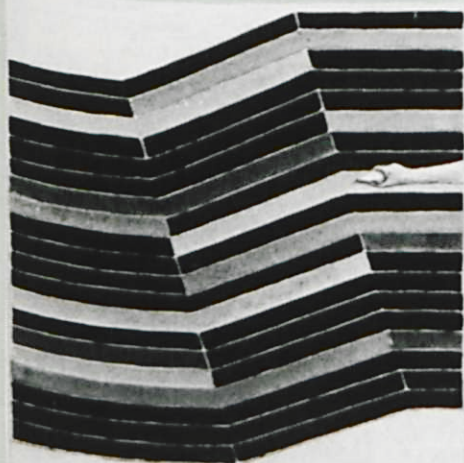
8. ALMOST THERE - copying from a postcard



12. IMPRESSIONIST-PIPING - starting to bring art-piping up to date.



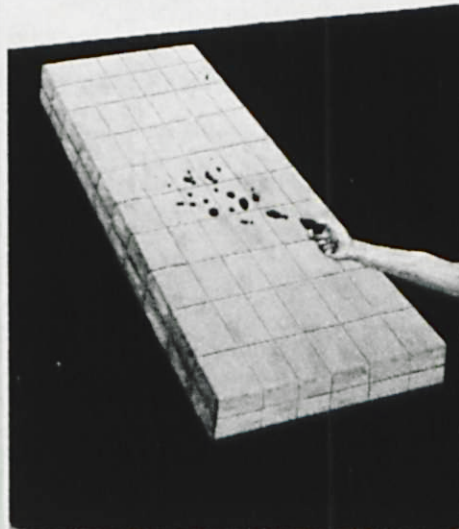
13. CUBIST-PIPING



17. HARD-EDGE-PIPING



18. POP-ART-PIPING



19. THE LAST GESTURES - minimal art piping being decorated with food colouring at the Tate.

POETRY

Soaking dirt at Burnley Public Baths
Feeling Ajax grit
Worn enamel,
Hearing roaring taps
Echo in a corridor of cubicles
I was a child again.

I viewed the world,
From three-quarters of the way up my mother's legs —
Half-way up the green peeling turnstile
I wondered at the animal noises of the taps,
— Lions —
The cork mats,
Which always felt warm
At the moist warm smell of my mother
As she took off her clothes
The gentle softness of her
As she held me close.

We would wallow for hours,
Pretend we were hippopotami
In the warm scented water,
My first swimming lesson between her legs.

by Sarah Brown



JENNY JONES



is needed and often lacking is genuine rapport and communication between doctor and patient?"

There are more concrete criticisms too. Lucienne Lanson is overly enthusiastic about hormone treatment in all its forms. The Pill is plugged not only as the best form of birth control but also as a way of controlling pre-menstrual tension (which it does not, except in very few cases) and of warding off endometriosis (which it might do). She does admit that side effects exist but in common with many of her colleagues, she suspects

that the pill has become "the chemical scapegoat for a variety of physical and even emotional problems". She even discounts loss of libido as a side effect on the grounds that just as many women report an increase in sex drive as those who complain of a decrease.

Rather more worrying than her contemptuous discounting of reported side effects is the absence of any mention of blood pressure problems nor the specific need for blood pressure checks. She also categorically states that the pill is contraceptively safe in the very first month of taking it. She

may well have a reason for differing from all established opinion but she should at least mention that her view is unusual.

Oestrogen therapy for menopausal problems is also described as a miracle drug with no side effects worth worrying about.

Other small things came to my notice: the advice to use vaseline or cold cream as a vaginal lubricant, but these products are not water soluble and can cause an upset in the vaginal balance. KY Jelly is the correct lubricant. Nor is there any discussion of preventive

measures for thrush and other minor vaginal infections and contraception is seen as a woman's problem: "It might make sense to consider a more permanent solution such as tubal ligation or even a vasectomy for your partner."

The book does contain a wealth of information on the ways in which you are likely to be treated for various complaints and disorders and because of its very orthodox approach it would be a useful guide to the treatment to expect. However it should not be read or used uncritically.

Angela Phillips

NELLY'S VERSION

by Eva Figes

(Secker & Warburg, £3.90)

"I do not know where I shall go from here." So ends another depressing novel about a woman isolated and alienated in a society she does not relate to. Nelly, it seems, is in a mental home though she says it's a hotel.

I couldn't help thinking that if Nelly had had a job she wouldn't have been able to take herself so seriously; as it is, her obsessive scrutiny of the maze her life has become (however much she disassociates herself from it) creates mazes of greater complexity. Nonetheless if you want to read another novel about middle class alienation, loss of identity, panic and passivity, this one is exquisitely written. It haunts and disturbs the reader, spreading its own little shadows over the reader's life. Like a bad dream, I couldn't shake it off.

It is the story of Nelly's search for herself. Like a detective story there are clues along the way as to her 'true' identity. I found it compulsive but depressing reading. At the end I felt cheated, having to recognise yet another cul-de-sac. Nelly encounters other people in her arduous survey, but the dialogue (which is minimal) doesn't ever sound as real as the internal monologue. (Maybe in Nelly's version it isn't?) The inanity of her direct speech I found irritating (perhaps Nelly did, too). Nellie has no way out of her labyrinth. Poor Nelly.

Natasha Morgan

THEATRE

ONCE A CATHOLIC

The Royal Court

The play follows the adolescent years of three catholic school-girls who attend a convent school in north London, where sex is a dirty word, tampons are obscene and the more basic facts of life are gleaned in the lav scanning underlined bits from the Bible.

One of the girls is cruelly seduced by a slick ted (the play is set in the 50s) who lures her into his mum's sitting room while the house is empty, draws the curtains (because of his migraine) and then lies down on the couch and says "Give us your 'and, love." Once he has "shot his load" he ushers her quickly to the door and closes the episode with those nasty little words: "See you sometime."

My laughter came from an embarrassed shock of remembrance. It's sad and the nuns' systematised indoctrination of the girls is horrific — one doesn't have to have been a catholic to appreciate it — the family upholds so many of the same false principles. But Mary O'Malley writes with a light and sympathetic touch, so I hardly felt the pain till the show was over.

Once a Catholic is trans-

ferring shortly to a West End theatre and will, hopefully, be published, so it should sooner or later be available to repertory theatres all over the country. You can always drop a note to your local theatre, asking them to stage it. There are some good parts in it for feminist acting sisters too.

AFTERSHAVE

The Apollo Theatre

I thought this was to be a show where women dressed as men to expose the stupidity and pathos of their role-playing. But the numbers are all written by a man, and the line on sexism is confused. Five women go through a number of disguises, singing and dancing while lights flash and the band plays on. It's pure plastic. Salvation Army women exhort us to suck whatever we can get hold of, a woman in an elegant man's suit sings about being raped by three huge women clad in leather, and the last number is a rousing hymn — "The Creation" praising women for having the initiative to take the first bite of the apple — at last Woman comes into her own — she's the one who gave us sex. Hallelujah, so . . . what else is new? Certainly nothing here.

Natasha Morgan

EXHIBITION

MANKIND

The Natural History

Museum

A recent addition to the museum's section on "Mankind" follows faithfully in the footsteps of patriarchal culture. I say this with sorrow because the exhibition is otherwise informative and stimulating for children of all ages — and adults.

It opens with large photographs of people doing things. Guess what the women are doing — one is shopping in a supermarket, one is standing by the stove in the kitchen, one is shown as a secretary. A man holds a camera.

I'm with my children, boys of eight and ten, and we've come to enjoy ourselves. We watch a short film on the growth of the foetus in the womb; the beginnings of

another human life, as they rightly say, in the womb of the mother, as they keep saying. This may seem a minor point, but it is conveying ideology to learning children — is a woman the same as a mother? Just as a foetus is not a baby until it is born, so a woman is not a mother until that moment.

We leave the film for a circular area with illustrations of a woman in labour and giving birth. The drawings avoid showing the woman's genitals. For all the children know a large hole is opening in the "mother's" tummy.

The next section is on growth. Five beautifully drawn wooden shapes of naked men are placed against a wall for visitors to measure themselves against. A good idea. I turn to look for the shapes of my own sex: I find four schematic figures on paper huddled together in three sizes. The

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grown up is holding a baby — get the message?

So it continues. And I've come here to have a good day out with my children to start the holidays, not looking for trouble. We go on to proportional changes in body shape throughout growth. Men only. Then there's illustrations of muscles. Men's of course. There's a comic strip on basic needs. A man holds a woman when it comes to sex. There's a display on problem solving. Men's privilege.

Finally, when it comes to sex hormones, we confront ourselves naked; a woman, a man, a boy and a girl. The woman stands small, shy, with eyes averted behind the man. The text reads: "The main purpose of all body changes is to get a mature ovum and a sperm cell together and to prepare the female body for a baby."

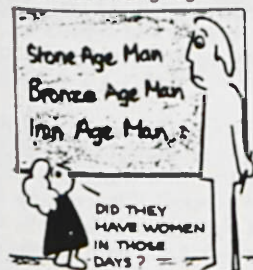
Throughout the exhibition women's reproductive function is stressed out of all proportion. Sexuality is not represented while men's function is left vague, which subtly attributes sexuality to men and reproduction to women. Crudely put, you could walk out of the exhibition believing that men have sperms and ideas, and women make babies. You might say that this is surely an exhibition strictly from the biological viewpoint. Can there be strictly a biological viewpoint? Social and emotional aspects have a vital influence on reproduction and by omitting them, biological facts are turned into fictions.

Greta Sykes

Apologies to CINEMA ACTION for publishing wrong phone no. in last issue. Please ring 01-586 2762.

Words and Women

Casey Miller and Kate Swift's witty, searching examination of sexist bias in language.



£4.50

Gollancz



Some small families live in big houses.



Some big families live in small houses.

HOW WE LIVE

HOW WE WORK

by Anita Harper, Christine Roche and the Kids Book Group

(Kestrel, £1.50 each)

Picture books that are non-sexist, non-racist and lack class bias? Do they really exist? And if they did, wouldn't they be unfunny, formula written propaganda as is so often argued? Well yes, they do exist, at last. And no, they are not formula written 'message' books. *How We Live* and *How We Work* are on the contrary two imaginative, humorous, well written and illustrated picture books stacked with clear non-sexist, non-racist and non-class biased messages.

These two books are intentionally committed statements for children about the different ways we live and work in modern society, and they do not fall into the trap of the cosy, bland consensus presentation of all our so interesting differences. In these two books, differences are for real, sadness and despair are not concealed and tension is as frequent as smiles. And the books work as books too; the colourful mixture of strip cartoon with full page pictures makes for an exciting and enjoyable read for three-year-olds and upwards. Adults too will get a lot out of these attractive books.

These books grew out of a commitment of the Kids Books Group, a collective of women writers and illustrators who first met in 1973, to introduce some non-biased reality into children's books. Four years later, the situation is a little more promising with a few titles appearing that do attempt to give children a view of the realities and complexities of modern society, a society in which women, blacks and working people generally exist and are fighting for their rightful place and access to power. These two latest books are an extremely welcome contribution to this growing non-biased literature.

In *How We Work* there are some stunning illustrations by Christine Roche of different jobs ranging from night cleaners to miners, including the dole queue, with women tightrope walkers and tractor drivers as well as the production line and doing housework (unpaid). Inequality of pay is also cleverly shown in a strong picture of an office which has all the style and power of a political cartoon. The book also contains a colourful version of Christine's original poster cartoon *Some People Have One Job, Some People Have Two Jobs* for the Kids Book Group. Only in this illustration is the political argument perhaps too sophisticated for the younger reader. Better to err by aiming high though.

In *How We Live* the strong one-line text is as effective as in the other book and the illustrations, particularly of the different lifestyles indoors, are punchy and lively. Here too, the message is as full as it is clear, with homelessness (alongside empty houses), single parents of both sexes, living alone, in a family or in a children's home; it's all there. In this book however, the illustrations are less effective when they depict the different shapes and sizes of houses, and caravans and houseboats are really more

interesting than shown here. But these are quibbles. These picture books can be unreservedly recommended for providing a unique, approachable and very funny — but no less hard hitting — view of work and homes in our Society. *How We Live* and *How We Work* are a must for library, home and school.

Andrew Mann (Children's Rights Workshop)

MORRIS'S DISAPPEARING BAG

by Rosemary Wells

(Kestrel £1.75)

This is the third Rosemary Wells' jokey little picture book to be brought out in Great Britain (see SR 59). Here again, boys and girls (rabbits) romp about and play together. They all play hockey, mix chemicals, and apply lipstick, one by one — and they all disappear sooner or later in the youngest rabbit Morris's disappearing bag. He's not left out after all. Beautiful illustrations, but why do children's book parents so inevitably stick to the stereotypes. Here Mum does all the work. For two-year-olds upwards.

Andrew Mann (CRW)

URSULA BEAR by Sheila Lavelle (Hamish Hamilton/

Gazelle 95p)

CLEVER POLLY AND THE STUPID WOLF by

Catherine Storr (Puffin 35p)

POLLY AND THE WOLF AGAIN by Catherine Storr

(Puffin 30p)

"Ursula liked bears so much that she wanted to be one" but how can she do it? She finds the answer in a library book about magic, copies down the spell, but doesn't bother to write down the bit about changing back into a girl...

Luckily Ursula the bear gets some help from a friendly and "unconventional" neighbour who paints pictures and plays the flute when "she could have been doing the housework".

This is a warm, unpatronising story about an imaginative girl, one of the few good books written for the very young who are just learning to read.

There are so few non-sexist books even for slightly older readers of seven and eight that I'd like to mention two excellent ones that have been out for a long time (and which are also suitable for storytime at home or at school). *Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf* and *Polly and the Wolf Again* are collections of stories about how Polly outwits the scheming wolf whose one ambition in life is to eat her up. Children enjoy seeing through the wolf's rather transparent plans, recognising the literary references (the wolf tries to get Polly to act out his version of *Little Red Riding Hood*) and identifying with Polly's sang froid, even when he carries her off between his jaws. Each exciting chapter has a separate adventure in which the tension is subtly and wittily maintained.

Rosemary Stones (Children's Rights Workshop)

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